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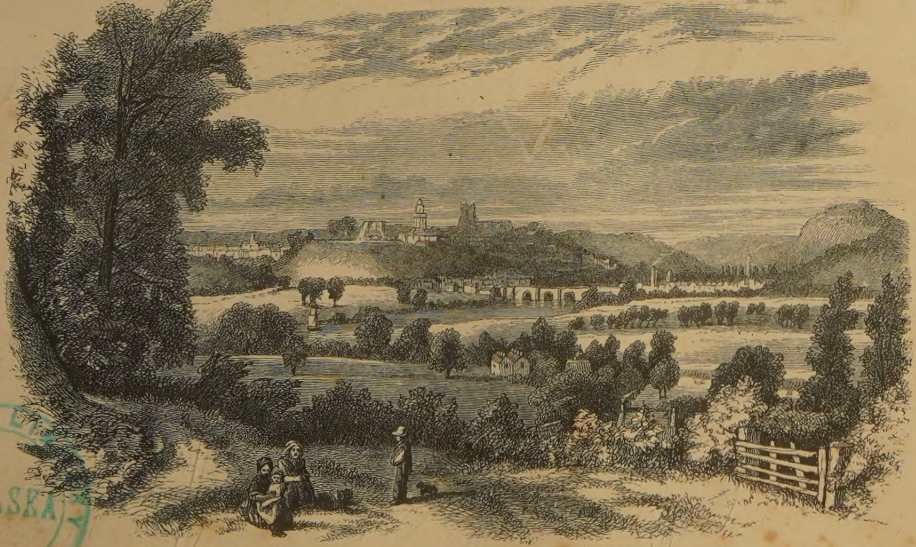

BRIDGNORTH.

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THE

ANTIQUITIES

OF

BRIDGNORTH;

WITH

Some Historical Notices of the Town and Castle.

BY

THE REV. G. BELLETT, A.M.

INCUMBENT OF ST. LEONARD'S.

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TO THE MAYOR, AND CORPORATION,

AND INHABITANTS,

OF THE

BOROUGH OF BRIDGNORTH,

THE

FOLLOWING WORK IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY THEIR FAITHFUL SERVANT,

G. BELLETT.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Substance of the following pages was given in two lectures, which I delivered last year to the Members of "The Society for Promoting Religious and Useful Knowledge." Since then I have collected a few more facts relating to the early history of Bridgnorth, which I have here given to the reader, and I have also added an Appendix, containing some matter not altogether, I hope, undeserving of attention, although some of it is only remotely connected with my subject. The public documents relating to the town, such as the Terms of Capitulation, and the Proclamation of Charles II., it has been thought desirable to give entire, as but few copies of them, especially of the latter, are extant.

It would seem superfluous for me, after the many quotations which I have taken from his learned work on "The Antiquities of Shropshire," to make any acknowledgement of my obligations to the Rev. Robert Eyton. But I owe him much more than is indicated by these quotations. He very kindly directed my attention to sources of information respecting Bridgnorth, which have been of the greatest service to me, particularly the Blakeway Papers, in the Bodleian Library, besides allowing me to refer to his better judgment and more extensive information, on any difficulty that occurred to me.

I am very much indebted also to Mr. Whitmore, of Apley, for his kindness in giving me the free use of his own collection of historical notices of our town and neighbourhood, from the MSS. in his possession. I would gladly avail myself of this opportunity of expressing my thanks likewise to the Town Clerk, for allowing me to consult the Common Hall Order Books, and other documents belonging to the Corporation; and to Mr. Hubert Smith for giving

me his valuable assistance in decyphering them. Nor should I omit to offer my thanks to the Rev. G. L. Wasey, for some interesting particulars which he communicated to me, respecting the early history of Quatford; and to Mr. S. Sidney Smith, from whose antiquarian lore I have, on several points, derived much valuable information.

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THE

ANTIQUITIES OF BRIDGNORTH.

PART I.

THE

ANTIQUITIES &c.

THE first thing which naturally engages our attention, in considering the Antiquities of Bridgnorth, is the origin of its name. This, as well as other names just as simple and intelligible, has afforded matter for the ingenious speculations of etymologists, who, by a sort of alchemy, of which they only are the masters, have transmuted it into a form totally different from its own. For instance, some have made it out that the name signifies the tower or castle on Morfe, and that it was originally *Burgmorfe*, the first syllable of which, "Burg," being derived from the Greek word πυργος, 'a tower', the other being the Saxon name of the

neighbouring forest, which extended over the large district still so called. But it is not easy to conceive, how "Burg" should have been transmuted into "Bridge," and still less so, how "Morfe" should have been corrupted into "North." The name is a very plain one, and just as plain is its etymology; *Bridgnorth i. e.* the north Bridge, or the bridge lying to the north of some other bridge. In every ancient record it is called "*Brugge*" or "*Brug*," the Saxon form of the word "Bridge," and there is no instance, I am informed, of the syllable "North" being added to it, at least in any public document, earlier than the reign of Edward I. Bridges in early times were not so common as they are now, and therefore a place, which had a bridge or bridges of any size, often took its name from this circumstance. Thus Bruges, a town in Flanders, was so named, from the numerous bridges over the canals, which intersect it; and Bridgetown, near which the famous battle of the Boyne was fought, was so called on account of the bridge, which there crosses the river. So our town received its first

name of "*Brug*" from the bridge, which here spanned the Severn; and was afterwards called "*Bridgnorth*," to distinguish it from a bridge lower down the Severn, at Quatford.*

After the origin of the name, the next thing to consider is the first foundation of Bridgnorth. There is no doubt that this is very ancient, probably as ancient as the age of Alfred the Great. The Saxon chroniclers inform us that Ethelfleda, the daughter of Alfred, who inherited the magnanimity which has made her father's name so illustrious in the page of history, aided her brother Edward in resisting the incursions of the Danes; and for this purpose erected several forts and castles in different parts of

* There can be no doubt that there was in ancient times a bridge at Quatford, for it is called in old writers, "Cwatbridge." It was very likely a wooden bridge, one pier of which stood on an islet in the stream. In the very ancient map of Bridgnorth, and of its immediate neighbourhood, which is in possession of the Corporation, (a copy of which will be found in the present volume) this islet is marked out, and called "Brugg Bylett," or Island Bridge. The present Ferryman, Richard Turley, very well recollects this bylet, and his having played on it when a boy: it was nearly a quarter of an acre in size, and covered with alders and willows. An old villager told the late Mr. Smallman that he remembered beams of wood being raised from that part of the river.

the country, and among these one at Bridgnorth.

It appears that the Danes, in A. D. 896, having been driven from their settlements on the banks of the Thames, and their fleet having been destroyed, retreated northward, and at last made their way to the Forest of Morfe, adjacent to Quatford, where, as some writers record, they entrenched themselves in a strong fortification.* We have proof of their having been in this neighbourhood, from the fact that a place between Bridgnorth and Quatford still bears the name of *Danesford*, marking the spot, where no doubt these wild marauders found a passage across the Severn, which passage they no doubt used in carrying on their depredations on the east side of the stream. There is supposed to be other local evidence of the Danes

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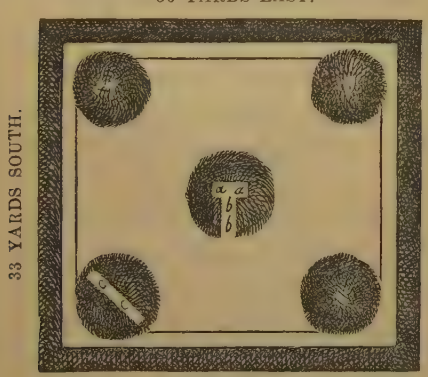
* "Aliâ excursione celeriter factâ in occiduas Angliæ partes in oppido ad Sabrinam, nomine Quatbrigia (forte Quatfordia prope Bridgnortham) quantâ poterant celeritate maximâ vallum sibi conficiunt."—*Spelman's Life of Alfred the Great*, *B.* 1, 94.

"In great haste they departed their fortress, leaving their wives and children to the mercy of the English, neither stayed they till they came into the borders of Wales, where at Quatbridge upon Severn, they built another castle."—*Speed*, *B. VII.*, *c.* 34.

having settled for a time in this neighbourhood, which is not without its interest. I refer to the discovery, made by Mr. Stackhouse, formerly Incumbent of St. Mary's, of an ancient burial ground upon Morfe, which from its character he supposed to be Danish.* The following account of it, together with the subjoined sketch, is given in the 460th Number of the Philosophical Transactions.



"In July, 1740, I observed upon Morfe "the tumuli as above represented, where the

* Mr. Hartshorne, in his *Salopia Antiqua*, *(p.p.* 91 *and* 101*)* expresses the opinion, that these tumuli were the

"soil is a strong gravel. Mountfaucon tells "us that the old Cimbri, [the Danes,] were "wont to throw up gravel on their graves, "and the more remarkable the persons were, "the larger the tumuli over them. I there- "fore imagined that this might possibly be "the burying place of the Danes. For sa- "tisfaction, I caused the middle and largest "of these tumuli to be dug from north to "south, (a.a.) supposing that by that method "I might cross the site of the body that may "have been laid there. We dug about seven "feet deep, even to the solid rock, without "meeting anything remarkable but an iron "shell, in the shape of an egg, with a round "hole at one end; but so cankered and de- "cayed, that it easily broke into small pieces. "This we judged to be the boss of a sword. "However, on viewing the trench that we "had dug, we perceived on the west side of "it a hollow in the gravel, which upon trial "extended horizontally four or five feet; and "under this hollow (b.b.) we found one of

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work of the ancient Britons, and not of the Danes. However, the same writer considers Burf Castle, an earthwork situated on the summit of a hill, about a mile and half east of Quatford, to be certainly Danish. *(p.p.* 210-12.*)*

"the large vertebræ of the loins, with its "processes pretty perfect, but thoroughly "petrified; and upon further search, several "portions of bones, all alike petrified, but so "disguised that we could not discover to "what part of the body they belonged. We "afterwards opened one of the lesser tumuli, "(c.c.) and found what is thought to be the "os sacrum, and many other small pieces of "bone, in a petrified state. It was great "odds that we found nothing at all, but "nature favoured us by preserving some few "tokens of antiquity." Mr. Stackhouse seems to have been disturbed in his archæological researches; for he mentions that the people of Bridgnorth flocked in great numbers to the spot, expecting to see great wonders, and to prevent further concourse, he was glad to fill up the trenches, and to leave the other tumuli unexamined.

From local and historical evidence then, it would appear that the Danes took refuge amidst the forests* which then covered that extensive district, and continued to hold possession of them for some time. But this

* Vide Appendix A.

was the last scene of their struggle against the Saxons, during the reign of Alfred. They were compelled after a while to leave these fastnesses upon Morfe; and Shropshire, and soon after the whole of England, was delivered from their rule. Then it was that Ethelfleda, in concert with her brother Edward, in order to guard against any attempts the Danes might make to regain their footing in the country, built castles in those places which were most liable to be attacked. One of these, as has been already mentioned, was erected at Bridgnorth, or, as it was then called, "Brugge." This establishes the fact, that our town, whatever may have been its exact size and situation, existed long before the Norman conquest, and that its foundation reaches back more than nine hundred years. But it is a higher honor to the town of Bridgnorth than even the great antiquity of its foundation, that it is thus associated in its early history with the name of this great princess —a name which poets and historians have justly made illustrious—and that amid the dangers which threatened the nation, she

took such special means to provide for its defence.

But what was the site of the castle which she erected at Bridgnorth? This is a question of very great interest. Most of those who have enquired into the subject have supposed it to be the eminence now known by the name of *The Castle Hill;* but Mr. Eyton, *(Antiquities of Shropshire, Vol.* 1, *part* 4, *p.p.* 131, 132*)* whose sagacity equals his learning on antiquarian subjects, has assigned to it a different site, and has most probably discovered its true locality. Every one has noticed, on looking westward from the Castle Walk, a very singular mound of earth, about two hundred yards distant, the regular shape of which plainly proves it to be artificial. It is now known by the name of "Pam-pudding Hill." This Mr. Eyton considers to be the site of Ethelfleda's castle, and supports his assertion on the following grounds. A document is extant, of the date of Edward I, in which the road beneath this hill is called the road underneath "the Old Castle." Now the castle on what is at present called the Castle Hill,

was in the time of Edward I. the existent and garrisoned castle of the town: so that the "Old Castle" must have been a term denoting some fortress of a more ancient date; and as we have no record of any earlier castle but that built by Ethelfleda, this, which bore in the reign of Edward I. the title of the "Old Castle," must have been hers. It is to be observed also, that the hill, called "Pam-pudding Hill," is situate in the parish of Oldbury, a word which plainly signifies "*Old Borough;*" and as Ethelfleda attached a borough to the castles which she built, there can be no doubt that the neighbouring village of Oldbury, however small its circumference at present, has the honor of being the original borough, having the site of the ancient castle erected by this Saxon princess within its borders; and that Bridgnorth at the time was little better than an appendage to it.*

But in less than two centuries after the erection of this fortress, Bridgnorth became a place of consequence; the commanding

* That Oldbury is more ancient than Bridgnorth appears from the fact, that the former is mentioned in Domesday Book, and the latter is not noticed.

position on which it stood, and the strong natural defences of the place, marking it out to the eye of a very bold and ambitious nobleman of the day, as a situation eminently fitted for a fortified castle. This nobleman was Robert de Belesme, the son and eventual successor to the English titles and estates of Roger de Montgomery, first Earl of Shrewsbury. Roger was a kinsman of William the Conqueror, as well as a very faithful vassal; and when William became possessed by conquest of this fair realm of England, he liberally rewarded his services by the grant of a very large share of territory in the conquered kingdom. He conferred on him the Earldom of Shrewsbury, with a feoff of four hundred and six manors, in which Quatford is included.—*(Blakeway's History of Shrewsbury, Vol.* 1, *p.* 37, *note* 3.*)* This he appears to have chosen as his favourite place of residence, perhaps on account of the opportunity it afforded him of indulging his Norman propensity for hunting; for the forest of Morfe was close adjacent to it. Here he not only built a castle,* but also built and

* The remains of this castle were still standing when

endowed a Collegiate Church, and founded a borough. All these however, the privileges of the borough, the garrison of the castle, and the chief endowments of the church, his son Robert de Belesme transferred to Bridgnorth. But the foundation of Quatford Church is an historical event of so much interest, and is so intimately connected with the early history of Bridgnorth, that it deserves more than a passing reference.

The following is the substance of the narrative of the event given by John Brompton, an ancient chronicler, who lived in the reign of King John:—In the year 1082 Roger de Montgomery married his second wife, Adelissa, daughter of Ebrard de Pusey, one of the chief nobles of France. As she was sailing into England to join her husband, she was overtaken by a dreadful tempest, from which the mariners thought there could be no escape. In the midst of this furious storm one of the ecclesiastics,

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Leland visited Shropshire, in the time of Henry VIII.—"Quatford is by S. E. from Bridgnorth on Severne, where as yett appeare great Tokens of a Pyle or Manour Place, longing that tyme to Robert de Belesme."—*Leland's Itinerary, Vol. IV., p.p.* 103, 104.

who accompanied her, wearied with watching, fell asleep; and in his sleep he dreamed that a female appeared to him, and thus addressed him:—"If thy lady would wish to save herself, and her attendants from the present danger of the sea, let her make a vow to God, and faithfully promise to build a church in honour of the blessed Mary Magdalene, on the spot where she may first happen to meet her husband, the Earl, in England; especially where groweth a hollow oak, and the wild swine have shelter." The story goes on to state, that, when he awoke from sleep, he communicated to his lady the particulars of this singular dream, and that she at once made the prescribed vow. The tempest soon calmed, and she and her attendants landed safely in some port in England, from whence she immediately made her journey to her husband's estates in Shropshire; and just on the top of Quatford hill, which was at that time in the outskirts of the Earl's hunting ground, and near a spot where an oak tree was growing, she met him, engaged in his favorite pastime: and there at her request, in fulfilment of her vow,

he built a church and richly endowed it.*

There are now on the high ground just above the church at Quatford, several oaks whose gnarled and knotted trunks seem to have borne the brunt of many centuries. They are evidently of a very ancient date. No one can attentively observe them, without seeing that they must have outlived several generations of men; and there can be but little doubt that they are right in their conjecture, who suppose them to belong to the original forest of Morfe. The supposition, that trees which flourished in the time of William Rufus may be still stand-

* This narrative may possibly be somewhat tinctured with the superstition which prevailed at the time; but there is no reason to doubt the general truth of it. Mr. Eyton, to whom I am indebted for my acquaintance with it, after giving the whole of the narrative in detail, in Vol. 1, part 2, p. 107, of his Antiquities of Shropshire, makes this comment on it:—"The whole of this narrative is credible in itself, and minutely consistent with other ascertained facts; nor need we take exception even to the Priest's dream, for who knows not that the feverish sleep of over fatigue will invest our hopes and anxieties with some garb of life-like reality. Moreover this priest lived at a time when priests were taught to believe in and to expect such special revelations of the divine will."

"Parts of this story nevertheless, require explanation; and the whole of it must be tested by other facts and dates before we admit it to that credence, which the details of a legend most seldom deserve."

He has applied such tests, and has been fully satisfied with the result.

ing, need not be considered extravagant; for the history of the oak and yew tree* in England furnishes many instances of equal longevity. "Among the most remarkable of such trees," says Mr. Wright, in his *History of Ludlow*, *p.* 181, "in the "neighbourhood of Ludlow, may be mentioned the aged oak on the brow of the hill "of Nonupton, or Nuns' Upton, near the "village of Little Hereford, which was probably standing there previous to the Conquest. . . .The tree is hollowed by decay, "and its branches mutilated by the effects of "time." An oak is at present growing in Chepstowe Park, called the Parliamentary Oak, from the fact that Edward I. convened his Parliament under it in 1290. Mr. Gilpin mentions a more remarkable instance: "Close by the gate of the water walk at "Magdalene College, in Oxford, grew an "oak, which perhaps stood a sapling when

* There is a yew tree known to the writer, at present growing in the church yard of Sampford Arundel, in the county of Somerset, but now hollowed by age, respecting which there is certain evidence, that more than a century has passed over it, without producing seemingly any change whatever in its state of decay; it is now, to all appearance, as it was more than a hundred years ago.

"Alfred founded the University. That "period only includes nine hundred years, "no great age," writes Mr. Gilpin, "for "an oak. This oak could almost produce "historical evidence for its age. About "five hundred years after Alfred's time, "William of Wainfleet expressly ordered "his College to be founded near *the great* "*oak*; and an oak could not well be less "than five hundred years old, to merit that "title. In the summer of 1788 it fell." *(Gilpin's Forest Scenery, Vol.* 1, *p.* 141.*)* But a much more ancient oak than even this a short time since was standing in Stirling, one which there is reason to believe existed in the time of the Druids, and which was so much decayed in the thirteenth century, that William Wallace and several of his officers used to take shelter at night in its hollow trunk. *(Forest Trees of Britain, by Rev. C. A. Johns, p.p.* 80, 81.*)*

These facts are sufficient to show that it is by no means improbable, that the oaks now standing in Quatford were originally trees in the Forest of Morfe; if so, one of them may be the very tree which marked out to

the Countess Adelissa the spot, adjacent to which she was to build the Church. Now among these oaks, one is of a very remarkable character. Time has so completely decayed the middle part of the tree, that the two portions of the trunk which remain have fallen asunder one from the other, and thus appear at first sight as two separate and distinct trees*—indeed, they are generally supposed to be so—but a closer examination will disprove this. It will be noticed that the bark is very much curled up, and if this

* That a single tree may be so decayed by time as to be divided into parts, and that these living parts may have the appearance of separate trees, we have a remarkable proof in the famous chestnut on Mount Etna, which was alive in the close of the last century.

Gilpin in his "Forest Scenery" has the following description of it:—"It is still alive (1791), but it has lost much of its original dignity. Many travellers take notice of it. Brydone was the last who saw it. His account is dated about sixteen or seventeen years ago. It hath the appearance of five distinct trees. The space within them, he was assured, had been filled up with solid timber, where the whole formed only one tree. The possibility of this he could not at first conceive, for the five trees together contained a space of 204 feet in diameter. At length he was convinced, not only by the testimony of the country and the accurate examination of the Canon Recufero, a learned naturalist in those parts, but by the appearance of the trees, none of which had any bark on the inside. This chestnut is of such renown, that Brydone tells us he had seen it marked in an old map of Sicily, published an hundred years ago."—*(B. 1., p. 135.)*

could be unrolled, it would be found to belong to a trunk, the circumference of which would include the two parts now remaining.

The above is a sketch of the tree in its present condition. Of course it would be very absurd, as well as unwarrantable, to assert that this is the hollow oak referred to in the narrative; but it is very likely, from its appearance, that the tree has been hollow for very many centuries; and this gives a degree of shadowy probability to the conjec-

ture, enough to invest the speculation with some amount of interest.

The church which now tops the neighbouring hill is an object that strikes every visitor of this district; and among the churches of our native land there are few that rival it in beauty of situation. But it is an object of great interest, not only on this account, but also because it is, in some parts of the structure at least, the very church which was built very nearly eight hundred years ago by Roger de Montgomery, in ratification of his wife's vow; and stands at this distant day, a monument of the faithfulness of her promise. Those who are skilled in archeological researches entertain no doubt, both from its form and from the nature of the material used in its construction, that a part of the chancel belongs to the ancient church of Quatford, of the eleventh century.

It was a wild and unfrequented spot on which it stood when first erected; but on the day of its consecration, this sequestered scene was thronged with a vast concourse of people, and must have exhibited

a most imposing spectacle: for we learn from an ancient document, that there assisted at the ceremony three Bishops, Woolstan, Bishop of Worcester, then above eighty years of age; the Bishop of Hereford, and the Bishop of Chester; six Archdeacons from neighbouring dioceses, and other ecclesiastics; besides several nobles of high degree, each with their accustomed attendants; and many officials and retainers of the Earl of Shrewsbury. And when we remember the gorgeous manner in which ceremonials of this kind were got up in the middle ages: when knights and ecclesiastics, barons and prelates, each in his appropriate costume, walked in solemn procession; when the pomp of heraldry and the sacred insignia of the Church were united to do honor to the occasion, we may judge what a striking and impressive scene was witnessed on the day of the dedication of this church on the hill of Quatford. The Earl richly endowed this church, constituted it a collegiate establishment, built a castle* somewhere contiguous

* There is little doubt that this castle stood on the picturesque rock which overhangs the Severn, near the

to it, and made a borough of the surrounding district; but the borough, castle, and collegiate establishment were soon after his death transferred to Bridgnorth; and in this way the history of Quatford is connected with the early history of our town.

We now come to consider more particularly the cause of this transfer, and the building, fortifying, and garrisoning the Castle of Bridgnorth, in the year A. D., 1102, by Robert de Belesme, the successor of Roger first Earl of Shrewsbury. This nobleman was of a most restless and ambitious spirit, and immediately after the death of William II. entered into a confederacy with other Normans to dethrone Henry I, and to set up his brother Robert Duke of Normandy in his stead, who landed in England in order to further their undertaking. The scheme was

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Ferry. A few years since, the late Mr. Smallman opened the trench which partly surrounds it, and removed from it three hundred cart loads of rubbish; the whole of which had evidently been thrown in from the inside, the strata lying in that slanting direction; and underneath he found several Norman relics, and fragments of the same stone of which the church was built; and as this stone was brought from Gloucestershire, it affords a pretty plain proof that the building of the church and castle were cotemporaneous.

defeated by the promptitude and sagacity of the king, who came to an accommodation with his brother, and induced him to return to Normandy; and then he turned his hand against the chief conspirators. After citing Robert de Belesme to appear before him, he publicly proclaimed him an outlaw, and proceeded against him as such; first laying siege to his castle at Arundel in Sussex. Meanwhile Belesme had not been idle, but had set about building and fortifying a castle in Bridgnorth.* He considered our hill rising in the midst of the valley of the Severn, and strongly fortified on most sides by natural defences, and commanding the adjacent country, as a fine military position, entrenched within which, he might for a long time, at least till succour was sent him by the confederates, hold out against the royal forces. He therefore engaged in this work with great vigour, and accomplished it with incredible speed. He had indeed no time to lose; but he completed the work in less than a year, before the king could

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* Appendix B.

disengage himself from his other enterprises, so as to allow of his following him to Bridgnorth. Florence of Worcester, in his Chronicle, states that he hastened the completion of this work, carrying it on night and day, and that he excited the Welshmen, who were in subjection to him, to the more faithful and speedy performance of his wishes, by awarding to them with a liberal hand, honours, lands, horses, asses, and all sorts of gifts. *(p.* 324, A. D. 1803, *English Translation.)* When we consider the strength of the Castle, and the solidity of its structure, it is quite marvellous that it could have been raised and fortified within so short a space of time. We may judge of the solid character of the building, by the only fragment which now remains of it, which is of the most massive kind of masonry.

It is difficult at this time to ascertain the exact dimensions of the castle; but this description of it by Leland, an antiquary of the time of Henry VIII, may give us some conception of what it was originally. "The "Castle standeth on the south part of the "town, and is fortified by east with the pro-

"found valley instead of a ditch. The walls "of it be of great height. There were two "or three stronge wardes in the castle, that "now goe totally to ruine. I count the "castle to be more in compasse than a third "part of the town. There is one mighty "gate by the north of it, now stopped up; "and a little postern made by force thereby "through the wall, to enter into the castle. "The castle ground, and especially the base "court, hath many dwelling houses of timber "in it, newly erected." It occupied, no doubt, a large portion of what is now called the Castle Hill; but its outworks and walls must have extended much farther. It is very likely that the gully, which now forms the passage of the Stony Way, was originally an artificial fosse or ditch, made for its defence in that direction. It is also in the memory of many, that there stood, on or near the site of the new Town Hall, a part of an ancient arch, which was evidently connected with the old castle, and perhaps formed its northern gateway, or the smaller postern which Leland mentions: so that its extent must have been considerable, and its different

appendages have occupied a large space of ground.

The above is a representation of the arch referred to, as it stood some years ago, and I believe very faithfully portrays it.

But nothing perhaps can give us a truer notion of the extent of the Castle of Bridgnorth, and of the magnitude of the building, than the great sums of money which were from time to time expended on its repair. We may thus judge of the cost of its first erection. There are existing

documents, which shew that from the reign of Henry II. to that of Henry III., there was a sum of money laid out in additions and repairs, amounting to more than £14,000 of modern currency.

It must indeed have been a most noble structure; and standing on such a commanding eminence, overlooking the course of the Severn in both directions, must have been almost without its equal. The traveller, as he came suddenly on the view of it from the Hermitage Hill, must have been struck with the beauty of the scene, in which it formed so prominent an object; and an enemy approaching it, from almost any quarter, might well be daunted by the remarkable strength of its position. One cannot but deeply regret the unnecessary and wanton demolition of it by the Parliamentary forces, in the Civil Wars. Had the ruthless soldiers of Cromwell been contented with dismantling it and taking away its defences, and reducing it as a fortress, it would still, crowning the hill, have formed, in its dismantled condition, one of the most picturesque ruins in England,

and made our town a centre of attraction to the lovers of antiquity. The sole remaining fragment of this noble castle is indeed one of the curiosities of Bridgnorth, for, like the leaning tower of Pisa, it is considerably out of the perpendicular; but the chief interest belonging to it, is its being the last relic of the famous feudal fortress of Robert de Belesme, and its having been not only a military garrison, but also a royal residence at several eventful periods of English history.

After Belesme had with such astonishing dispatch built and fortified this castle, he garrisoned it with stipendiary soldiers, and placed it under the command of Roger, son of Corbat; but he himself, on the approach of the King, retired to Shrewsbury, where he prepared to make a vigorous resistance. The King advanced on Bridgnorth, and laid siege to the castle. It is plain, from the numerous forces which he collected on the occasion, that he considered this enterprise one of some difficulty. The Saxon chronicle states that "he went *with all his army* to Bridgnorth, and resided there till he had the Castle." *(English Translation, p.* 146.) And

Florence, of Worcester, records the same event in these words: "he himself besieged Bridgnorth, with *the army of nearly all England.*" Even if we take these words in a qualified sense, they shew what vast preparations the King made for this siege, and what a large military array the fields around Bridgnorth must have exhibited on this occasion: nearly all the forces which the sovereign could assemble—legions of Norman and Saxon soldiers—hosts of infantry, horsemen, spearmen, and archers—accompanied by siege trains, such as were then in use—led on also by gallant knights, the flower of England's chivalry—and animated by the presence of the King himself. The little garrison within the Castle, when they looked down from their walls on this formidable host, as they were crossing the Severn, or winding their way beneath the base of the hill, must have felt great confidence in the strength of their position, not to have been ready to surrender on the first summons. But they held out for three weeks, when an incident occurred which for a while interrupted the siege.

The nobles who followed the King were unwilling that he should crush so powerful a feudal Lord as Belesme, lest the regal power over the vassal nobility might become excessive. On a day, therefore, when the siege had made some progress, they held a meeting, in a field where the royal army was encamped, and advancing to the King, proposed that he should offer terms of accommodation to the Earl. But their purpose had transpired, and the country gentlemen of Shropshire, manifesting a spirit of loyalty, which happily has been transmitted to their descendants, assembled on one of the hills which surrounded the King's camp, to the number of three thousand, and lifting up their voice, as the old chronicler relates, exclaimed, "Sir King, regard not what these "traitors say: remember the repeated trea- "son of this your enemy—how often he has "conspired against your life—and lay not "aside your purpose: storm the town. We "will support you, and never leave you till "your foe is brought alive or dead to your "feet." Encouraged by their loyalty, the King at once adopted vigorous measures,

which succeeded. He summoned Corbat and the other governors before him, and swore, in the presence of his court, that if within three days they did not surrender the castle, he would hang the whole of the garrison. These threats had the desired effect. The garrison agreed to surrender: they shut up the stipendiaries in one part of the castle, and opened their gates to the King, who entered amid the acclamations of the townspeople. Soon after the capture of the castle, the King set out for Shrewsbury, in pursuit of Robert de Belesme; and having surmounted the dangerous pass, as it was then considered, of Wenlock Edge, and cut his way through the entangling forest which lay at its base, he laid siege to Shrewsbury. But Belesme, alarmed at the bold and energetic movements of the King, surrendered himself to his mercy.* His life was spared; but he was banished to Normandy, and all his English estates became forfeit to the crown.

* "However odious Robert had now become; though his turbulent and vindictive character had left him but few friends, the scene which followed must have been affecting to those who could reflect, if such there were, on the instability of human grandeur. On the King's approach

His history was afterwards marked by many disasters, and at length he died in a prison at Warham Castle, where he had languished some years in miserable captivity. Such was the wretched issue of treachery and rebellion —such the bitter fruits of "vaulting ambition"—such the consequence of setting aside that divine principle, which is alike the safeguard of personal peace, as well as of public tranquillity, "Fear God, honor the King."

The castle of Bridgnorth, after its surrender, became one of the Royal Castles of England, and was occasionally made the residence of Henry I. This is ascertained from the fact of some charters, granted by him, being dated at "Brug"—Bridgnorth—and also from the Sheriff of the County, by the King's order, sending a quantity of wine into the castle—a circumstance which was anticipatory of a royal visit. *(Eyton's Antiquities of Shropshire, Vol.* 1., *p.p.* 246-7.*)*

But after an interval of about sixty years,

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to Shrewsbury, the Earl quitted the town, perhaps for the last time; bearing himself the keys of the gates, he threw himself at the Victor's feet, acknowledging his treason, and sued for mercy."—*Blakeway's History of Shrewsbury, Vol.* 1, *p.p.* 58-9.

Bridgnorth Castle sustained a second siege, in the reign of Henry II, conducted by the King in person. It was at this time in the possession of Hugh de Mortimer, one of the adherents of the late usurper, King Stephen. On the accession of the new monarch, he caballed against him, and having fortified his three Castles of Wigmore, Cleobury, and Bridgnorth, prepared to bid defiance to the royal arms. The Castle of Cleobury was soon taken and destroyed, but the Castle of Bridgnorth held out for more than two months, when it was compelled to surrender to the besiegers. Two circumstances are connected with the narrative of this siege, which are not without interest. Some charters were granted by the King while the siege was carrying on, the subscribing names of the witnesses to which shew that Henry on this occasion was attended by many persons of high rank, both civil and ecclesiastical. Among these appears the name of one, who is as conspicuous in the annals of English history as perhaps any other individual, and who by his ambitious pretensions, seconded by abilities of a very high order, and

a dauntless spirit, disturbed the reign of Henry II. more than all his foreign enemies, and for the murder of whom the King was obliged to perform the most humiliating penance at his tomb—the famous Thomas á Becket. A charter granted to Stoneleigh Abbey, and dated, "Apud Brugiam in obsidione"—at Bridgnorth during the siege—is signed by Thomas á Becket, as one of the witnesses; *(Antiquities of Shropshire, Vol. 1, p.p. 249-50)* so that if any of our townsmen should make a pilgrimage of curiosity to his shrine at Canterbury, it may add somewhat to its interest to know, that this renowned ecclesiastic was present with the royal forces at Bridgnorth, during the second investment of the Castle.

The other circumstance to which I refer is an act of devoted loyalty on the part of one of King Henry's attendants, which is said to have taken place at this siege. While the King was directing the operations of the assault, one of the garrison from the walls of the castle aimed an arrow at him. The shaft sprung from the bow, and was so well directed, that it would have pierced the

breast of the King, had not a Knight,* observing the danger, and seeing no other mode of averting it, immediately stepped before the King, and received the arrow in his own body, and died at the feet of his sovereign:† an instance of generous valour, which is not without its parallel in modern history. I refer to an incident which took place at the battle of Ferozeshaw, in India, about ten years since. The Commander-in-chief, the noble hearted Lord Gough, seeing a part of his line stagger under the fire of the enemy, bethought him if he could direct even a portion of the cannonade for a few moments to another point, the crisis of the battle would be passed. He forthwith rode forward, attended by a single aid-de-camp, and making himself prominently conspicuous to the

* It is generally supposed that this Knight was Hugh de St. Clare; but Mr. Eyton proves that it could not have been he, if the transaction took place at the second siege of Bridgnorth Castle, as his death did not occur till after that date.—*Vol* 1, *p.* 248, *note* 19.

† It is very remarkable that King Henry II. was saved from death on another occasion by a singular accident, as he was entering the town of Limeoges, in Normandy. "From the Castle," Daniel narrates, "is shot a barbed arrow, which had tooke him directly in the brest, had not his horse, by the sudden lifting up his head, received it in his forehead."—*Collection of the Historie of England, p.* 91.

Sikh gunners, moved slowly to one side, as if for the purpose of reconnoitering the entrenchments close at hand. In an instant almost every gun in the battery was turned upon him. The shot ploughed up the dust about him, so as well nigh to hide both himself and his horse from the enemy's view, yet not one took effect; and so complete was the diversion, that the line of infantry felt as if relieved, and with a shout sprang forward. The next moment saw the redoubt, with all the artillery which it contained, in their possession. *(Quarterly Review, No.* CLV, *p.* 205*)* The heart of this British General at the battle of Ferozeshaw, and of the Norman Knight at the siege of Bridgnorth, were animated with the same spirit of dauntless gallantry. They were both cast in the same mould of ancient chivalry.

There are no public documents, I believe, of much interest, which refer to Bridgnorth during the reign of Richard I; but there are very frequent notices of it in the reign of his successor King John. He visited the town on several occasions. It has been observed respecting this king, that nothing

could show more plainly the unsettled state of the realm of England during his reign than his moving about so continually, as he did, from one part of the kingdom to another; for during the whole of the eighteen years of his reign he scarcely ever remained more than a few days in one place. *(Wyld's History of Ludlow, p.* 134.*)*

The frequent disturbances which occurred on the Welsh borders drew him into Shropshire, and it was on these occasions that he visited Bridgnorth. He was here, for instance, in the year 1200; and again four years afterwards. On the latter occasion he was attended by a splendid retinue. There were in his train the Bishops of Lincoln and of Hereford—the Earls of Essex, Pembroke, Chester, Salisbury, Warren, Lancaster, Warwick, and Hereford: also the Provost of Beverley, and Hugh de Nevil, and William Briwere; and it may give us some idea of the extent of Bridgnorth Castle in those days, that it could afford accommodation not only to the King and his immediate attendants, but to so large a train of noblemen and knights, and lodge within its walls

the retainers of so numerous a Court. King John had not at this, or at any other period of his reign, much occasion for holding high festivities, yet it appears that he indulged in them at this visit to Bridgnorth Castle; for although the visit lasted but three days it cost the King, what in our currency would amount to £2000. There is a writ extant, dated 1204, by which the King orders his treasurer to pay back that sum to the Sheriff of the County, for expenses incurred during his visit at Bridgnorth.—*(Antiquities of Shropshire, Vol. 1, p. 265.)*

He was again at Bridgnorth in the month of August, 1212—a very calamitous period of his reign—when the kingdom was placed under the Papal Interdict, and his subjects absolved from their oath of allegiance; and the extraordinary rapidity of his movements in various directions at this time—almost incredible if it were not fully authenticated—shews the restless anxiety of his mind under the embarrassing circumstances in which he was placed. For instance, in the month of May he was in Hampshire; two months later, we find him at Bristol, July

26th; on the 27th, at Devizes, in Wiltshire; on the 29th, at Winchester; at Marlborough on the same day; at Tewkesbury on the day following; the next day at Worcester; the next day at Bridgnorth; in the heart of Powis land on the 2nd, where he stormed and levelled to the ground the famous Castle of Mathraval; and then back again to Bridgnorth. These expeditious movements and energetic exploits of King John shewed that he inherited some of the vigour which characterized the noble race of the Plantagenets, to which he belonged, though usually this native energy was kept in abeyance, probably by an almost unceasing consciousness of crime. *(Antiquities of Shropshire, Vol.* 1, *p.p.* 268-9.*)*

In this hurried journey of the King from Worcester to the Welch borders, through Bridgnorth, it is curious to notice the variety of things which he thought it necessary to have conveyed with him, most of which, however, he was obliged to leave behind him in Bridgnorth Castle. First it is mentioned, that the sumpter horse, which carried the King's bed on this occasion, failed, and not

being able to proceed further, was left here. Also there were in his train two valets—grooms of his bed chamber, with their horses and attendants—the King's falconer, with his hawks—and two carters and four sumpterers, who carried the King's wardrobe. All these accompanied his march no further. It also appears that some coffers, containing certain sacred relics, which accompanied the Court on all ordinary journeys, were left at Bridgnorth on this occasion. One certainly would not have thought it at all likely, that the King on this important expedition—pursuing his Welch enemies in such eager chase—would have provided himself before setting out with means for engaging in the less warlike sport of hawking; or that he would have thought of any kind of pastime, when he had such weighty business on hand. And when his sumpter men and horses, so well laden, halted at Bridgnorth, it must have somewhat astonished the loyal people of the town, to see such large appliances and means for the King's amusement, under the perilous circumstances of the times.

It was more however in character with

this King, that he should have brought along with him in his march the religious relics above referred to; and that he should have given directions for them to be treated with superstitious reverence. A document is extant, which shews that over these, during the three days that they remained at Bridgnorth, wax candles were burnt at the King's expense.—*(Antiquities of Shropshire, Vol.* 1, *p.* 269.*)* In King John, as in the case of many others, there was a strange combination of the most immoral principles, nay, of the most criminal passions, with the strictest regard to superstitious observances. At the very time that he was pursuing a course of wickedness, which made his name hateful to his subjects, he was practising severe austerities on himself, which he would not allow himself to omit, without making atonement for the neglect,* and going through a round of rites and ceremonies,

* One of the days on which King John was at Bridgnorth happened to be a fast day, notwithstanding which, he, being wearied most probably with his incessant marches, ate twice; for which supposed offence he atoned by feeding a hundred paupers with bread, fish, and beer. —*(Antiquities of Shropshire, Vol.* 1, *p.* 269.*)* His scrupulosity in this matter is the more remarkable from the fact,

with all the zeal of an earnest devotee. It was but a short time after his visit to Bridgnorth, where he had observed this childish ceremony of illuminating these relics with wax candles—supposing he was thereby offering to God acceptable service—that he committed that merciless act of cruelty in the town of Nottingham, of sentencing to death thirty-two of the Welch hostages, which had been delivered him at the late peace; and such an eager desire for vengeance did he manifest on the occasion, that he would not taste of food till he was assured that the bloody deed was done.

King John was again at Bridgnorth, two months after the memorable event of his signing *Magna Charta*. This great constitutional charter of England's liberties the Barons had compelled the King to grant; but the faithless monarch no sooner thought that he could do so with impunity, than he revoked it; the Pope acting as an accom-

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that however important the scriptural exercise of fasting may be on certain occasions, yet it has always been dispensed with under the circumstances in which John was then placed—viz: taking a fatiguing journey.—*(Bishop Taylor's Works, Vol. 3, p. 170.)*

plice of his perfidy, by absolving him from his oath. This threw the kingdom into a state of universal confusion, and civil war raged from one end of it to the other. It was about this time that the Burgesses of Bridgnorth began to fortify their town with a wooden rampart, (a caution suggested no doubt by the troubles of the time) and a large allowance of timber from the Forest of Morfe was made to them for that purpose.* Historians give a dreadful picture of the state of the nation at this period. The King having levied a band of mercenaries, commenced hostilities against his own subjects, and marching through the whole extent of his kingdom laid waste the provinces on each side of him, and by fire and sword made as wide a devastation in England as if it had been an enemy's country. It was towards the close of this destructive progress, and about two months before his death, that King John visited Bridgnorth for the last time. During his short stay of two days he issued several charters, and then proceeded to Worcester, afterwards to Gloucester, and

* Appendix C.

from thence to Newark; where—either from the pressure of extreme fatigue, or great anxiety of mind, or as some naturally enough suppose, from the effects of poison—this unhappy monarch died, and "freed his kingdom," as the historian well observes, "from the dangers to which it was equally exposed, by his success, or by his misfortune." [*Hume, Vol. 2, p. 92.*]

In the reign of his son and successor Henry III, Bridgnorth was as frequently honored by a royal visit, as it had been in the previous reign. Henry III. had frequent occasion to come into Shropshire, on account of the dispute which had arisen between him and Llewelyn, Prince of Wales: sometimes for the purpose of entering into negotiations with him, and sometimes for the purpose of repelling his incursions by force of arms. It was on one of these occasions, September 1st, 1226, that the King, who had just left Bridgnorth, issued a royal edict at Kidderminster—one not of any historic interest, but of great local value; and one which the people of Bridgnorth, and of the neighbourhood, are glad at this day to take

advantage of—viz: an edict which established St. Luke's Fair in this borough. It ran in these words, "The King grants, till he come of age, that the men of Bruges may have an annual fair, to last for three days—viz: the vigil, the day, and the morrow of St. Luke the Evangelist."—[*Antiquities of Shropshire, Vol.* 1, *p.* 302.] So that those who assemble at this annual mart of butter and cheese, to make their purchases for the winter, may bear in mind that they do so in virtue of a royal edict passed in the thirteenth century, and that the fair which they keep is consequently of more than six hundred years standing.

In the month of April of the following year, 1227, King Henry renewed to the Burgesses of Bridgnorth the Charter* which had passed the Great Seal in the previous reign; but on the 20th of June in the same year, he granted them a totally new one, which differed from the original charter principally in this, that it conferred on the Corporation the fee-farm of Pendlestone Mills, or, as they are now called, "The

* Appendix D.

Town's Mills." The clause in the charter which made over this property to the Corporation of Bridgnorth, is as follows:—"Moreover we have granted to our aforesaid Burgesses, that they and their heirs may hold in fee-farm for ever our Mill at Pendlestone, without the town of Bruges, upon the river Wurgh, with suit of the town of Bruges, and all other its appurtenances; rendering therefore to us and to our heirs yearly, by their own hand, at our Exchequer £10—viz: at the feast of St. Michael, one hundred shillings, and at Easter, one hundred shillings."—[*Antiquities of Shropshire, Vol.* 1, *p.* 303.] In virtue of this clause in the ancient charter of Henry III, the Town's Mills are the property of the Borough, the Corporation being the Landlords of them, and the custom of paying a yearly rent to the Crown is still continued.

In the year 1265 Bridgnorth was visited by King Henry, and his gallant son Prince Edward, afterwards Edward I, on a very memorable occasion, and one connected with events of such historic interest that it deserves particular notice. The reign of

Henry III was greatly disturbed by the rebellious proceedings of Simon de Montfort, son of a well-known Italian nobleman of that name, who had rendered himself so famous by his cruel crusades against the Albigenses. Simon de Montfort, the younger, came into England to take possession of the estates, which his father had left him, about the middle of Henry's reign, and he was graciously received by the King; but although the King shewed him many favors, and united him in marriage to one of the royal family, he soon raised a rebellion against him, and threw the kingdom into the same state of miserable confusion, which prevailed during the previous reign. In a successful battle, which he fought at Lewes, he got possession of the persons of the King and Prince Edward, and in consequence became virtually master of the whole realm. But during this eclipse of the King's fortunes Shropshire faithfully adhered to the royal cause, and maintained throughout this disastrous period its character for loyalty.

Among the Barons, who proved their fidelity to the King's declining cause, the

Constable of Bridgnorth, Hamo de Strange, was pre-eminent. He held the Castle in spite of de Montfort's imperious summons to surrender; and though repeatedly commanded by the usurper in the King's name to yield, and to leave the kingdom, he bade defiance to the mandate, and bravely maintained his post, till the great victory at Evesham over the rebels restored the monarchy.—[*Antiquities of Shropshire, Vol* 1, *p.* 285.] In this famous battle Prince Edward, who had a short time before escaped from the hands of de Montfort, led the army of the Royalists, and by his consummate military skill, as well as by his signal valour, completely routed the rebels. De Montfort, their leader, observing the skilful disposition of the Prince's forces, is reported to have exclaimed, in utter despair of the fortunes of the day, "The Lord have mercy on our souls, for I see our bodies are the Prince's." These gloomy forebodings were fully verified. In the fierce encounter, which ensued, De Montfort was slain with his eldest son, and about a hundred and sixty knights, and many other gentlemen of his party, and his

army put completely to the rout, so that the Prince was left undisputed master of the field. It was not long after this memorable action, that the people of Bridgnorth, and their loyal constable, had the high honor of receiving into their town the King, the Queen, the gallant Prince, and other members of the royal household. It appears from some ancient documents, that great preparations were made for their reception on this occasion; and that the grand victory of Evesham, which brought about the restoration of the Monarchy, and the overthrow of a tyrannical usurpation, was celebrated within our Castle walls with festive rejoicings.—[*p.* 258.] It also appears that the loyalty of the Burgesses during the season of the adverse fortunes of the King, and the losses which they had incurred in consequence, did not pass unnoticed. The King liberally rewarded them. The official papers which attest this, allege as the reason for the royal bounty "the losses which they [the Burgesses of Bridgnorth] had sustained in the time when the kingdom was disturbed, and because they faithfully

adhered to the King, and to Edward, his son, in the time aforesaid."—[*p.* 309.]

The wise and energetic measures, which Edward adopted, when he succeeded to the throne, put an end to the civil dissensions by which the kingdom had been so long distracted; and this circumstance, as well as his having finally annexed the Principality of Wales to the British crown, prevented the necessity of his making those military expeditions into the border counties, which had been so customary in the reigns of his predecessors. But Edward II. proved as feeble as his father had been vigorous in his government of the kingdom, and the consequence was, that in a short time after his accession the realm was disturbed by a renewal of intestine feuds, and rebellion soon raged from one end of the kingdom to the other. A second confederacy of the Barons against the king, which was formed for the purpose of enforcing on him the banishment of his favorites, the Despencers, took place in the year 1321, and this brought about another siege of Bridgnorth Castle.

The circumstances which led to it were

these :—The Earl of Baddlesmere, who owed all his honors, and the largest part of his ample estates to the bounty of the king, joined the factious Barons in their rebellion, and, adding insolence to ingratitude, proceeded so far as to countenance a great affront offered to the queen. She having occasion to pass his Castle of Leeds, in Kent, desired a night's lodgings within its walls, and was refused admittance, and some of her attendants were wantonly killed before the gate. Edward shewed more promptitude and energy in revenging this wrong, than in any other action of his reign. He marched immediately with some forces to Leeds Castle, which he took, and executed the governor, and having secured Baddlesmere's treasures, pursued him to his estates in Wiltshire, and from thence, after a while, to his estates near Shiffnal. The confederate Barons, taking alarm at the victorious progress of the King, assembled their forces to besiege Bridgnorth. They burnt part of the town and took the Castle, in the hope, that being masters of this important post, they would be able to check the further advance of the

royal army. But they did not long keep possession of it. The King came here in person at the head of his army, and after a brief siege retook the fortress from the rebels, and from thence marched in triumph to Shrewsbury, where the Burgesses, to grace the triumph of their sovereign, came forth to meet him, clad in armour, and where the chiefs of the insurgent Barons, the two Mortimers, were obliged, as humble supplicants at his feet, to sue for mercy.

Five years after the date of this triumph the King was here again, but under very different circumstances. The aspect of his fortunes had become completely clouded, and the hopes, that had flushed his breast as he crossed the Severn in pursuit of his discomfited enemies, were exchanged for bitter disappointment and anxious forebodings; and he entered our Castle on this occasion, not as a victorious general, or an acknowledged king, but as a fugitive and an outlaw, on whose devoted head a price was set. His faithless Queen, who added political treason to private criminality, had joined in a conspiracy with Mortimer and other

disaffected Barons, and had summoned a parliament for the purpose of deposing her husband. The act of deposition was easily passed. The king was virtually dethroned, and feeling, as well he might, that his life was in jeopardy, he anxiously looked out for some place of refuge, where he might remain in safety till his friends brought him succour; and judging from its position and its strong natural defences, that Bridgnorth Castle would afford him a secure retreat, he took refuge in it. This circumstance is recorded by an ancient historian,* who mentions that in this dangerous crisis of his affairs, when he had reason to dread personal violence from his enemies, the unhappy monarch resolved to betake himself to some well fortified place, where he might be safe till his friends should send him succour; and that he chose Bridgnorth as admir-

* Cum ad extremum omnia timeret, nec quicquam tam calamitosum putaret quod non in suam fortunam cadere posse videretur, statuit in locum aliquem munitum se abdere, ibidemque expectare, dum amici opera et armis juvarent: itaque noctu cum paucis suorum per Sabrinam noviculo vectus ad oppidum Brygnorthum in arcem, quæ ibidem egregie posita est, clam recepit. *Polydore Virgil. Lib.* XVIII, *p.* 357.

ably adapted to the purpose. Therefore, after nightfall, he left his place of concealment, wherever that may have been, and entered into a small boat with a few of his attendants, and having crossed the Severn took refuge in our Castle. How long our loyal fortress shielded him from the conspirators is not known; but, after a time, they discovered his retreat, and dragged him from it—took him prisoner first to Kenilworth, thence to Berkley Castle, in Gloucestershire. The sequel is well known to every reader of English history. After suffering from those, in whose custody he was placed, every kind of indignity and insult which their malice could heap on him, he died under the hands of merciless assassins, whom they hired to despatch him, a death of extreme torture.

Such was the catastrophe which closed the reign of Edward II.—a reign so signalized by troubles, and so saddened by the personal sorrows of the sovereign, as well as by public calamities, that the affecting words, which Shakspeare has put into the mouth of one who after a short time was the suc-

cessor both of his honors and of his misfortunes, might well have been adopted by Edward as his own:—

"In Winter's tedious nights sit by the fire
With good old folks, and let them tell thee tales
Of woeful ages long ago betid;
And ere thou bid good night to quit their grief,
Tell thou the lamentable fall of me,
And send the hearers weeping to their beds."

Richard II., Act v., *Scene* 1.

It must add to the interest with which we regard the remaining ruin of our Castle, to reflect that when its walls and battlements were still standing, it afforded shelter to the unhappy Edward in his hour of need; and that Bridgnorth was the last place in his realm, where he received the homage due to royalty, even in ruins.

ANCIENT ECCLESIASTICAL ESTABLISHMENTS.

It is now time to turn the attention of the reader to the Churches, and other ecclesiastical establishments, which existed in former times in the Borough of Bridgnorth.

They were of great antiquity. The most ancient of them was

The Church of Saint Mary Magdalene.*

This Church originally stood within the walls of the Castle, and was a Collegiate Church, the members of which were five Prebendaries and a Dean. "The which "Deanery and Prebends," to quote the words of John Brompton, "the King indeed

* The above sketch of the old Church of Saint Mary Magdalene is taken from a print in the Taylor's Buildings, Oxford.

"conferreth of his own right and custom; "although in nearly all other Collegiate "Chapels the Deans, being installed by the "Sheriff at the King's collation, and in- "ducted into corporal possession of the "Deaneries, confer all Prebends in the same "Chapels, and install, induct, and visit the "Prebendaries. But in the aforesaid Chapel "of Saint Mary Magdalene, the Dean con- "fers no Prebend, nor visits Prebend or "Prebendary; but each in the corps of his "own Prebend, hath and exerciseth plenary "jurisdiction, as well in things spiritual, as "in things temporal;" so that it was in an especial sense a Royal Chapel; and the whole ecclesiastical district connected with it, and subject to its Prebendaries, bore the title, which it still retains, of *The Royal Peculiar and Exempt Jurisdiction of the Deanery of Bridgnorth.* It was first founded, as has been already noticed, at Quatford, and from thence transferred, with all its rights and privileges, and the chief part of its endowments, to Bridgnorth, in the latter part of the reign of William Rufus, or early in the reign of his successor; so that it is a

very ancient foundation—nearly seven hundred and fifty years old.

The privileges connected with it were considered very important, and were guarded with the strictest jealousy from all encroachments, not only by the members of the chapter, but by the Crown. So much was this the case, that in the year 1241, when some delegates of the Pope attempted to levy contributions in the Deanery of Bridgnorth, as well as elsewhere, for the See of Rome, they were opposed, as interfering with the prerogatives of the Royal Peculiar; and this opposition the Pope himself was obliged to sanction and ratify; for on the complaint of the King, he issued two Bulls at Lyons, in which he recognises the rights of the King's free Chapel at Bridgnorth, and forbids all attempts made to levy procurations from it.

The Deanery of Bridgnorth at this time was held by Peter de Rivallis, of whom (although his course reflected no honor on his sacred calling) it may be well to take a passing notice, inasmuch as his name stands connected, not only with the early

history of Bridgnorth, as being Dean of the Peculiar, but with some of the important events in the reign of Henry III. Peter de Rivallis was born at Poictou, and through the influence of his uncle, the Bishop of Winchester, was introduced into the English court, and was made Treasurer of the Chamber in the King's Household. He soon became a great favorite with his master, who invested him, notwithstanding his clerical calling, with all the Royal Castles in Shropshire. The confidence placed in him was unbounded, and the favors heaped upon him almost without a parallel; for while he was Dean of Bridgnorth and Constable of the Castle, a grant was made to him of the Shrievalties of Shropshire and Staffordshire for life; also of the counties of York, Berks, Gloucester, Somerset, Dorset, Devon, Lancaster, Northumberland, Essex, Hants, Lincoln, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Kent. These, and such like favors, profusely heaped upon his foreign courtiers, tended to alienate the minds of his English subjects from the King, and were specially resisted by Richard Marshall, Earl of Pembroke. He and other

English nobles entered into a confederacy with Llewelin, Prince of Wales, and laid waste the county of Salop to a considerable extent; and carrying their forage as far as the gates of Shrewsbury, pillaged and burnt part of the town. This illustrious nobleman who is called by ancient historians "the flower of chivalry," and who was more than a match for his enemies in the field, was at last cut off by a base act of treachery, in which the Dean of Bridgnorth bore the chief part. He, with others, forged a letter, as if sanctioned by the King, and sent it to Ireland, announcing the forfeiture of the Earl's Irish estates, and promising a partition of them amongst those who would arrest his person. This document however was not sufficient to satisfy the Irish nobles, and they dispatched messengers, requiring the King's sealed charter on the subject. Peter de Rivallis forged the required document, and attached the great seal to it; and the plan completely succeeded. The Earl's Irish possessions were invaded; in consequence of which he crossed the Channel in order to protect them, but in a skirmish,

after having manfully maintained his ground against fearful odds, he fell mortally wounded; and died in the hands of his enemies, subjected in his last moments to every species of cruelty and insult.

For this murder of the noble Earl of Pembroke (for it was nothing less) the Dean of Bridgnorth was arraigned before the King and his Justiciaries. He appeared on this occasion strangely habited for an ecclesiastical dignitary; for he wore a corslet underneath his clerical garment, and had a dagger suspended from his girdle, and appeared half soldier, half priest. The King, assuming an appearance of anger which he did not feel, for he secretly rejoiced at the death of the Earl, accosted the Dean in very furious language, calling him a traitor, and accusing him of having entered into plots which had brought damage and disgrace on his kingdom. The Dean was sentenced to be committed to the Tower; and when he pleaded his clerical orders, as a reason why he should not be given up to the custody of a layman, the King answered, reasonably enough, that he had always demeaned him-

self as a layman, and as a layman he was now required to give an account of his stewardship: and forthwith gave orders that all his lay possessions should be confiscated.* His name certainly confers no honor on the Royal Peculiar of Bridgnorth, of which he was Dean; but I thought it well to give this brief sketch of his history, as reflecting the manners of the age in which he lived, and as shewing in a very striking way the miserable condition in which the Church was sunk at that period. It was not then as it was afterwards, in Puritan times, when, according to the lively author of *Hudibras*,

> "The pulpit, drum ecclesiastic,
> Was beat with fist, instead of a stick."

Sharper and more formidable weapons were wielded in those days by men in holy orders, and wielded at times to some purpose. It was doubtless a sad perversion of the right order of things, when soldiers in Cromwell's army took upon them the office of divines; but it was a far worse perversion,

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* This account of Peter de Rivallis, given by Mr, Eyton (in his *Antiquities of Shropshire, Vol.* 1, *p.p.* 330. 334), is collected from the historian, Matthew Paris.

when divines became soldiers—when the tonsure was covered with a plumed helm—when Bishops and Deans, like this famed Dean of Bridgnorth, hid a coat of mail underneath their cassock, and wore a dagger at their girdle—when Dignitaries of the highest rank, as was not seldom the case, led out armies to the field, and, sword in hand, mingled in the thickest of the fight.

But the case above referred to, of Peter de Rivallis, is not the only one, which affords evidence of the existence of such a state of things, in early times, in the Deanery of Bridgnorth. In the reign of Edward III, one Henry De Harley, upon a false report of the death of the Dean, Thomas de Eyton, obtained a grant of the Deanery from the king. Thomas de Eyton however making his appearance some time afterwards in the King's presence, the grant to De Harley was of course withdrawn, and a special mandate given for restoring the rightful Dean. But the ejected Dignitary, not willing to resign the benefice so easily, flew to arms, resolved to support his claim at any cost. His opponent was equally vigor-

ous in the measures which he adopted for the establishment of his rights. They both raised a body of armed men, in order to decide the matter in dispute by the sword; nor was the unseemly strife put an end to, but by the interposition of the sovereign. *(Dukes' Antiquities of Shropshire, p. 49.)*

But about this time there was one connected with the Collegiate Church of Saint Mary Magdalene of Bridgnorth, whose name would cast a lustre on any church in any age; and it is pleasant to turn from these indecent scenes of ambitious strife among ecclesiastics, to contemplate a character so truly exalted as his. The individual, to whom I refer, was one whose influence on the Church and State was very considerable in his day, having been twice entrusted with the Great Seal of England, both in the reign of Edward III. and Richard II; and Bishop of one of the most extensive dioceses in the kingdom—yet one, whose virtues were more eminent than his rank or talents, and to whom, it should be added, the Church of England owes more, perhaps, than to any other individual, for the sound and learned

education of her clergy—the memorable William of Wykeham. He was Prebendary of Saint Mary's* in the year 1360; and it is no little honor to our town, that the name of this great and good man is thus connected with it. This may justify my introducing here a few particulars respecting him; for it seems desirable that none of the readers, for whom these pages are chiefly intended, should be unacquainted with one who was by far the most illustrious person ever connected with the Collegiate Church of Bridgnorth.

Wykeham, early in life, before taking orders, was introduced into the Court of Edward III., and recommended himself to the King by his great skill in architecture. He was made surveyor of his works; and to him it is chiefly that the Royal Family of England are indebted for by far the noblest

* In the certificate, made to the Archbishop of Canterbury, of the benefices of William of Wykeham, is the following entry:—"Item the aforesaid Sir William of Wykeham, at the time of the date of the aforesaid monition, by collation of our Lord, the illustrious King of England, the canonry and Prebend of Alnthle, (Alvelcy) in the aforesaid our Lord the King's free Chapel of Bruggenorth."—*Lowth's Life of Wykeham p.* 34.

of their palaces—Windsor Castle. He grew into such favour with his sovereign, that he heaped preferments upon him, both civil and ecclesiastical, till at length he advanced him to the important See of Winchester. In the government of his Diocese he was a great reformer, and most zealously set himself to correct the ecclesiastical abuses which he discovered; and by the purity of his own life, as well as by the strict and vigilant discipline which he exercised, brought about a great improvement in the condition of the clergy. Through the royal bounty, wealth flowed in on him in great abundance; but he was only intent on finding channels for the useful distribution of it. His munificence was unbounded, so that it is doubtful whether any sovereign Prince ever expended so large a revenue on others, as he did in his public and private charities.* Among other works, which attest the largeness of

* "Whosoever considers the vast buildings and rich endowments made by this prelate, beside his expense in repairing the Cathedral at Winchester, will conclude such achievements impossible for a subject, until he reflect on his vast offices of preferments."—*Fuller's Church History, B.* IV., *Cent.* XIV.

his heart in this respect, may be mentioned his maintaining twenty-four poor persons in his own family—his building and restoring churches, and erecting residences for his clergy, at his own expense—and his rebuilding at an immense cost the nave of his own Cathedral Church at Winchester, which stands at this day a noble monument, not only of his princely munificence, but of his architectural taste; for there are few ecclesiastical buildings in England that equal it in dignity and grandeur. But the chief works which have rendered his name illustrious as a benefactor, are the building and endowing two noble Colleges, one at Winchester, and the other in Oxford; the former of which he designed as a nursery for the latter. These he enriched by very large and liberal endowments, and enriched them still more by the treasures of wise counsels and wholesome laws which he introduced into the statutes, which are so admirable—"drawn up with such judgment and reach of thought," as Collier observes, "that they have been transcribed for the benefit of other houses; and served as it were as a

pattern to the principal Colleges of Oxford and Cambridge;" *(Ecclesiastical History, Book* VII, *p.* 270*)* so that it is no hazardous assertion to make, that no one person in modern or ancient times has done more—perhaps none so much—for the sound education of the clergy of England as William of Wykeham, some time Prebendary of St. Mary's, Bridgnorth. At this very time, after the lapse of nearly five hundred years, Bridgnorth is receiving the benefit of his noble institutions; for the present Head Master* of Bridgnorth Grammar School is a Wykehamite, taught, and trained, and nurtured in Winchester and New College. His fitness for the important post he at present occupies, he owes, in part at least, to William of Wykeham: so that whatever Wykeham in ancient times received as Prebendary in the Deanery of Bridgnorth, he is now paying back to its inhabitants, in the good instruction which is given to their children in Bridgnorth Grammar School.

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* The Rev. H. G. Merriman, M.A.

The Church of Saint Leonard.

The other Church of Bridgnorth, Saint Leonard's, is, in all probability, nearly as ancient in its foundation as Saint Mary's. No document exists which gives us the exact date of its foundation, but there is reason to believe it is coeval, or nearly so, with the foundation of the Borough; for Leland, who visited Bridgnorth in the reign of Henry VIII., states that Saint Leonard's was the sole Parish Church of the town; and as it is not to be supposed that so important a Borough would have been without a Parochial Church even in its infancy, a very early date must be assigned to it. Mr. Eyton, who suggests this strong argument for the antiquity of its foundation, subjoins to it however the remark, that "as yet no architectural evidence occurs to strengthen this assertion." But he was not aware, when he made this observation, of the fact, that in making some repairs in the chancel, a few years since, the workmen came upon a stone carved with a moulding which is supposed to be of Norman character; affording very probable evidence that the building, of

which it was a part, belonged to the early period to which Mr. Eyton refers.

The earliest written notice which can be referred to respecting St. Leonard's, though it implies the pre-existence of the Church, cannot itself be ascribed to an older period than the middle of the thirteenth century. It occurs in a legal document, and is as follows:—"Roger, son of Richard Irish, (Hybernensis) sells to Walter Palmer, for 6s., a rent of 6d., issuing from certain field-land without the cemetery of Saint Leonard, which land William Sholton held of the Vendor, by the same rent." *(Antiquities of Shropshire, Vol. 1, p. 341.)* It is also ascertained from existing documents, that two chantries, or side chapels, were set up in Saint Leonard's; the one in the time of Edward II, the other in the time of Edward III. This latter was founded by William de la Hulle, who "assigns his messuage in Bridgnorth, (lying between the conduit and a tenement belonging to Richard Brown) also thirty acres of land, and sixty shillings there, to three chaplains, who were to pray daily in the Church of Saint Leonard's, for

the souls of his father and mother, and for his own soul, and those of his two wives and children." *(Dukes' Antiquities,* XXXVII.*)* I cannot but think that there still exists in Saint Leonard's Church some remains of one of these ancient chapels. In the south wall of the nave there may be seen a Piscina, about six feet above the level of the present floor: the height of it proves that the wall, in which it is placed, formed part of a former structure, the floor of which must have stood a good deal higher than the present one, for the usual height of a Piscina from the ground was about two or three feet. A Piscina also, it is to be noticed, was an appendage to an altar, and was never built but in connection with one; so that there must have been an altar, and consequently a chapel, in this part of Saint Leonard's Church, of which the present south wall formed a part; and we have no reason for supposing this to be any other than that attached to the parish Church, in the reign of Edward II, or Edward III.

John Leland represents Saint Leonard's Church in his time (A. D. 1536) as one of

great beauty, and there can be no doubt that originally it was a large and magnificent building; for as late as the year 1645, when Symonds, an officer in Charles's army, visited Bridgnorth, it was still "a noble structure," ornamented with painted windows. He has given a sketch of the figures on several of these. One of them, here given,

was that of an ancient Knight in armour, with his sword girded on his right thigh, and his cross-shield painted beside him. It is supposed to be Adam de Molineux,*

* "Grandson of Robert de Villiers, Lord of Little Crossby. This is supposed to be the knight, who was pourtrayed in the glass of three windows, in the upper part of Bridgnorth Church, in Com, Salop, in antique

who lived in the reign of King Henry III.

Symonds also gives a description of some Altar Tombs, situate in the north aisle (an aisle unhappily no longer in existence), on one of which "lay a man in armour and a woman, with many painted escutcheons, belonging to the Hoord family, of Hoord's Park. Another in the same aisle, the statue of a woman, fayrlie gilt, in alabaster, with this inscription circumscribed, and coats of arms."

"HERE LYETH THE BODY OF
FFrancis FFermer,
DAUGHTER OF THOMAS HOORD, ESQ.,
AND
WIFE OF THOMAS FERMER, ESQ.,
WHO DYED
10 DAY OF JULY, 1570."*

The present Church of Saint Leonard's, parts of which belonged no doubt to the original building, forms, in the condition in which it now stands, a sad contrast to the "fayre church" of John Leland's time.

mail, cloathed with a surcoat, and girt with his sword and spurs: over which is an equilateral triangular shield, in which the arms of Molineux are depicted."—*Baronetage*, 1741, *in voce*.

* Symonds's Diary, a M.S. in the British Museum, p. 45.

Perhaps the future inhabitants of the town and of the surrounding district, all of whom have more or less an interest in it, may feel an earnest zeal for this house of God, and may possess the means as well as the desire, of compleating the restoration of it, which was begun a few years since, but was discontinued for want of funds. It is a pity, even in an architectural point of view, to see it in its present decayed condition; for it stands on as fine a platform, perhaps, as any ecclesiastical building in England, and might be made, without any considerable cost, both externally and within, a noble temple. Its ancient Churchyard too, the burying place of so many generations, will, it is to be hoped, ere long, be rescued from the dishonoured state in which it lies. There sleep the dead of many centuries. A few feet below the level of the present graves lie the remains of those, who died in the period of the great Rebellion—some of them slain, perhaps, fighting for what they deemed the cause of God, and of their country. A few feet deeper rest the ashes of men, who were co-temporary with Cranmer and Ridley,

and who witnessed the progress of the glorious Reformation. Deeper still lie those who died in the stormy times of York and Lancaster. Lower still would be found the dust of those, who belonged to the age of the great Plantagenets; and on a still lower bed sleep those who lived when the sceptre of England was swayed by Kings of Norman blood. Reverence then for the dead, who were buried there ages long since, as well as reverence for those who have been laid there in our own time, should make us anxious to see restored to a higher degree of decency and order than at present marks its condition, the ancient Cemetery of Saint Leonard's Church.

I greatly regret that the historical notices of Saint Leonard's Church are so very scanty; for loving as I do, the very stones of the old building, I should have been glad to associate it with any interesting traditions of an early date. But these are wanting. However, in the *Blakeway Papers*, in the Bodleian Library, there is preserved the narrative of one incident that occurred in Saint Leonard's Church, which is indeed

worthy of a memorial. It is of too private a nature to find its way into the page of history; yet, by those who are familiar with the locality where it took place, and who find pleasure in the manifestation of nobleness of disposition and magnanimity, even in the youngest, it will not be read without interest.

The manuscript from which I copied it is as follows:—"Mr. Leighton told me a story connected with this church, which is worth relating, though I can assign no date or name to it. Two boys were at play in the upper part of Saint Leonard's Church, when some of the beams or joists, on which they were standing, gave way. One of the boys had just time to catch hold of the beams with his arms, and the other boy slipping over his body caught hold of the other boys legs. There they hung for some time calling for help: but no one heard them. At length the upper boy said he could hold no longer. The lower boy said, "Do you think you could save yourself if I were to loose you." "Yes," said the other, "I think I could." "Well then," said he, "God bless

you," and loosing his hold was instantly dashed to pieces. The upper boy got up upon the beams, and either climbed to a place of safety, or remained till some one came to his assistance." This was heroism of the noblest type; nor did the knight in Roman story, who is described as leaping into the gulph in the Forum, evince more true intrepidity of mind, or a more generous spirit of self-sacrifice, than did this poor youth, when he thus quietly loosened his only hold on life, to secure his companion's safety, and calmly wished him well in the name of God, as he was about to make that fearful fall, which would indeed be life to his friend, but inevitable death to himself. If his name were known, and the exact spot where this affecting incident occurred, they would have been well worthy of being put on record on a mural tablet, in Saint Leonard's Church.

Besides the Collegiate Church of Saint Mary Magdalene, and the Parochial Church of Saint Leonard, there were several other religious establishments in Bridgnorth, pre-

vious to the Reformation. But before I enter on any account of these, it is right that I should take a passing notice of something far more ancient than any of them; which, though standing within the parish of Worfield, is locally connected with our town, and associated with its religious history—namely,

The Hermitage.

On ascending the very steep hill, which

leads out of the town towards Wolverhampton, every one has observed, on the right hand side of the road, a cave hollowed out of the sand-stone rock, which on examination is found more extensive than might at first be supposed. This, there is reason to believe, was in old time the solitary dwelling place of one of the Saxon Princes, a brother of King Athelstan; and hither it is believed he had fled, both that he might enjoy religious solitude, and also screen himself from the violence and treachery to which his Brother Edwin had fallen a prey. Documents are extant, which shew that there was a Hermitage here in the reign of Edward III., under the patronage of the Crown, and that it bore the name of Athelardestan—a Saxon word, which signifies "the rock" or "stone of Ethelward." * Thus documentary testimony supports the ancient tradition, that this cave, amidst the seclusion of Morfe Forest, was the cell of a royal anchorite—one who turned his back on the intrigues and fascinations of a court,

* See the subject discussed by Mr. Eyton, in *Vol.* 1, *p.* 353, *Antiquities of Shropshire.*

and sought in this deep retirement a course of life more congenial to his feelings. No doubt it was a mistaken sense of duty, which made such men bury themselves in these dark solitudes; for it is far nobler to encounter the world, and to overcome it, than to retire from the conflict—better amidst its corruptions and cares, its trials and temptations, to keep ourselves unspotted by it, than to seek an escape from its evils by deserting the sphere of our appointed duties. It is difficult for us, perhaps, to realize the position of serious and peaceful minds in times of lawlessness and violence, yet at all times the best exercise of self denial and mortification* is to be found in the common path of daily life—in intercourse with our fellow men—not in seclusion from them;

* There is a store of practical wisdom on this subject in these two verses of the Morning Hymn in the "Christian Year,"

> "We need not bid for cloister'd cell,
> Our neighbour, and our work farewell;
> Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
> For sinful man beneath the sky.
>
> "The trivial round, the common task,
> Would furnish all we ought to ask:
> Room to deny ourselves; a road
> To bring us, daily, nearer God."

and that must be a mistaken piety, which seeks to please God by forsaking the responsibilities of our station, and cutting ourselves off from the sympathies and charities of life; still we must not scorn such piety, even though we detect its errors, and lament its weakness; but willingly cherish the hope, that its mistakes and deficiencies were pardoned by Him who is not extreme to mark what is done amiss, and that many an occupant of a solitary hermitage, like this of Ethelward, in the secret preference of his heart, chose the good part which shall not be taken from him.

Hospital of Saint John.

We now come to consider the Ecclesiastical Establishments before referred to, and first that which is usually called the Hospital of Saint John, though it was also dedicated to the Holy Trinity and the Virgin Mary. It was founded by Ralph de Strange, Lord of Alveley, in the reign of Richard I. Such hospitals, though they became after a while a refuge for the poor and destitute generally, yet were originally designed for

the entertainment of travellers, and especially of pilgrims, and therefore were built by the way side, that so they might be as accessible as possible, and that the tired traveller might not have far to go for rest and refreshment.* Saint John's hospital was well situated for this purpose. Standing within the angle formed by Mill Street and Saint John's Street, it commanded every highway by which travellers entered the town from places lying eastward of the Severn. The roads from Quatford and Claverley, and Worfield, and Shiffnal, all converging to a point on that side of the Bridge, passed close to its gate; and no doubt many a wayfaring man, wearied with threading his way through the mazes of Morfe Forest was glad, when he had descended the hill, to rest under its friendly roof.

The earliest royal recognition of this Hospital bears date March 9th, 1223. It is a mandate of Henry III., by which he directs Hugh Fitz Robert, Forester of Shropshire, to give the Brethren of the Hospital of St. John twelve cart loads of dry wood in Morf

* Tanner's Notitia Monastica, p xxviii, note.

Forest. There is another, about two years later, by which King Henry III., being then at Bridgnorth, commands the same Hugh Fitz Robert to allow the Master and Brethren of the Hospital of the Holy Trinity of Bruges to have three oak trees in Morf Forest for their fire, of the King's gift. There is also a record of a trial, which took place at the Assizes in Shrewsbury, in the close of the same century, between the Crown and the Prior of this Hospital, respecting some land in the parish of Alveley, claimed by the Prior as part of the endowment of the establishment by Ralph Le Strange. The claim was disputed by the King's Attorney, who set forth the royal title as by descent from Henry II. The Jurors however found upon their oath, that "the Master had greater right to hold the land as he held it, than the King to have it as he claimed it." The members of this Religious House were a Prior, or Master, and several Lay Brethren; and the Mastership of it was in the reign of Edward IV. annexed to the Abbey of Lilleshall.*

* Tanner's Notitia Monastica, p. 451.

The Hospital of Saint James.

This was an establishment of a very different kind. It was designed only as a place of refuge for persons afflicted with severe or contagious diseases, and was termed in legal documents *Domus Leprosorum Jacobi*, or as *Maladria Sancti Jacobi*.* It stood outside the town, east of the road which led from Saint John's Hospital to Quatford. Its founders were, probably, the community of the Borough of Bridgnorth, and such an establishment may be considered as one of the sanitory measures which they adopted for the benefit of the town. Many of the large towns in England had establishments of this nature in the thirteenth century; and there is evidence to prove, that the Leper House of Saint James, in Bridgnorth, was founded previously to 1224; for on the 22nd of September of that year, Henry III, who was then at Bridgnorth Castle, issued the following mandate to Hugh Fitz Robert,

* Mr. Eyton mentions that there was a Maladrerie near Bridgnorth of older date than this, being described in deeds as "Vetus Maladria." It was situated on the Oldbury side of the town, and abutted on two water courses, called "Reymund's Ditch," and the "Ditch towards Aldebur."—*Charter at Apley Park.*

"Know that for the reverence of God, and for the health of our soul, and the soul of the Lord King John our Father, we have granted to the Leprous Brethren of the Hospital of Saint James, at Bruges, that they may have one horse, daily plying in our Forest of Morf, to collect dry stumps and dead wood for their fires, until we come of age." There is also a very early charter of the thirteenth century, now in the possession of T. C. Whitmore, Esq., of Apley, bearing the Seal of the Hospital of Saint James, by which it would appear that this society was constituted without any superior of its own body, and that it acted under the guidance, and with the consent of the good men of the town, and that its members were of both sexes. *(Antiquities of Shropshire, Vol.* 1, *p.* 349.*)*

These two establishments, the Hospital of Saint John and that of Saint James, the one for the relief of the indigent, and the refreshment of travellers, the other for the relief of diseased persons, were swept away by the Act for the dissolution of Monasteries and Religious Houses, which passed in the

reign of Henry VIII. What now answers to these two in our town, are the Union Poor House and the Infirmary. I am not about to institute a comparison between the modern institutions, and those of olden times; and I most willingly bear testimony, that the indigent and invalids, who are admitted into the Poor House and Infirmary of Bridgnorth, receive the kindest and tenderest treatment; at the same time we ought to be aware, that the ancient Religious Houses of this Country, two of which were connected with our Borough, afforded to the sick and needy substantial relief, and that, whatever defects might belong to the system on which they were carried on, they were for a time of essential service. Abuses did creep into them no doubt—abuses of so flagrant a character, as called loudly for reform—nevertheless, they afforded a shelter for houseless poverty, a retreat for old age, and a refuge for disease, not to be found elsewhere; and when a rapacious and mercenary law* decreed their dissolution, confis-

* It is a very common opinion, that the suppression of the Religious Houses in the reign of Henry VIII. was

cated their property, uprooted their establishments, and swept them from the land, it left the poor unbefriended, and subjected them to the severest sufferings, by casting them for relief on the precarious supply that private charity afforded. The late Professor Blunt, of Cambridge, in his valuable work on the Reformation, gives the following description of the ancient Religious Houses, which is as true as it is graphic. "They "had been the Almshouses, where the aged "dependants of more opulent families, the "decrepit servant, the decayed artificer, re-"tired as to a home, neither uncomfortable "nor humiliating. They had been the

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universally countenanced and encouraged by the Reformers; and Roman Catholic writers are very anxious to give this opinion currency; but it is wholly groundless. Almost all the Bishops of the new learning, as the Reformers were called, were against the misapplication of the Abbey lands; and Queen Anne Boleyn, though so strong a favourer of the Reformation, is said to have been so averse to the measure, that she put up Bishop Latimer upon preaching against it before the King. On the other hand, the measure found very strong advocates among the Roman Catholics, Laity and Clergy; and of these one of the most conspicuous was the famous Bishop Gardener, who is said to have been as busy as any in declaiming against the Religious Houses, and to have commended the King in many of his sermons for suppressing them.—See some curious statements on the subject in *Tanner's Notitia Monastica, p.* XL, *notes.*

"County Dispensaries, a knowledge of medicines, and of the virtues of herbs, being a part of Monkish learning. They had been foundling asylums, relieving the state of many orphan and outcast children, and ministering to their necessities, God's ravens in the wilderness, bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening. They had been Inns to the way-faring man, who heard from afar the sound of the vesper bell, at once inviting him to repose and devotion, and who might sing his matins with the morning star, and go on his way rejoicing." *(p.* 141.*)*

The Friars.

This was a House of Franciscan or Grey Friars,* an order that was founded by Francis of Assisi, early in the thirteenth century, and introduced into this country in the reign of Henry III. About the middle of that reign, a branch of this fraternity settled in Bridgnorth, and fixed their residence by the Severn side, on a site now occupied by

* They were called Grey Friars from their habit, which was a loose garment of a grey colour, reaching down to their ankles.—*Notitia Monastica, p.* xxi.

Messrs. Southwell's Carpet Manufactory. There they built both a Friary and a Church. The great Hall, or Refectory, which belonged to this establishment is still standing, and its oak-pannelled ceiling and stone fire-place have not yielded to the wear of time, but, after the lapse of six hundred years, are still in good preservation. Some years ago, a few skeletons were dug up near this spot, and very lately several others have been found; the place where they lay marking out, no doubt, the situation of the Cemetry, which belonged to the Church of the Friars.

There is a record of a curious trial at Shrewsbury Assizes, bearing date 1272, which brings the Friars of Bridgnorth under notice. They were charged with having enclosed the King's highway on the bank of the Severn, thereby damaging the King's revenue. It was stated on this trial, that "they take stones and rubbish from the bank of the Severn, and throw them into the river, whereby they have realised to themselves a piece of ground, one hundred and fifty feet long, and fifty feet wide,

and this they have enclosed. By which process the bank causes the water to pound upon the King's Mills, the damage whereunto is five merks per annum, and this was done sixteen years back." I must leave it to engineers to determine, whether or not there is any trace of this artificial bank still remaining, and whether it is owing to the construction of it, that the Eastern side of the river, near Bridgnorth, is now so much more easily flooded than the Western: if so the inhabitants of the Low Town owe a grudge to the Grey Friars of the thirteenth century.

But some of the brethren of this community were, I doubt not, often employed in much more important work than in banking up the Severn, and gaining ground by encroaching on its channel. By the ancient seal of their foundation, an engraving of which is given on the following page, it may be seen that they were "*prædicatores*" — preachers. It was a dark age in which they discharged this office, and some blessed truths, which hold a prominent place in the system of the Gospel of Christ, were

unknown to them, or known very indistinctly. Nevertheless, many a hooded Friar, in those days of darkness, did the best he could, with the little light he had, to enlighten the ignorant around him; and He who does "not despise the day of small things," would not suffer his labour to be altogether in vain.

The Monks and Friars of former times have so bad a name among Protestants, (and indeed there is too much reason for it) that

it may seem strange that I should express a hope, that the establishment of this Friary of Franciscans in Bridgnorth, should have answered any good purpose; yet I venture to do so. No doubt such establishments became in later years exceedingly corrupt—almost as corrupt as those who profited by their dissolution wished to make out. Often they harboured evils within them of an enormous magnitude. Nevertheless, they at times numbered among their members some most earnest and devoted servants of our Lord, who, in the retirement of their closets, meditated devoutly on His Word, and went forth from thence with a burning zeal to preach it to others. In expressing an opinion, that piety of the highest order might be found among the inhabitants of a cloister, however corrupt the system may have been with which they were outwardly connected, I am glad to be able to fortify myself by so great an authority, and so unsuspected a witness, as Archbishop Leighton. His biographer states, that although he was no friend to monastic seclusion, and regarded the greater number of

the regular Clergy of the Roman Catholic Church as "*ignavi fures*," yet at the same time "he recognized among them a few specimens of extraordinary growth in religion; and thought he had discovered in the piety of some conventual recluses a peculiar and celestial flavour, which could hardly be met with elsewhere. Of their sublime devotion he often spake with an admiration approaching to rapture." * On such a topic I cannot refrain from quoting also the following striking passage from Dr. Maitland, whose acute and learned researches into the state of religion in the middle ages, entitle his opinion to the greatest weight. "I feel "no doubt, that, in the darkest age, there "were many true and accepted worshippers "of God. Not formed into churches, and "eminently bearing their testimony in cor-"porate capacities *as* churches, against the "See of Rome (for then I think we should "have heard more about them); but as the "sheep of Christ, dispersed abroad in the "midst of this naughty world—known, per-

* Pearson's Life of Archbishop Leighton, prefixed to his works, p.p. CXVII, CXVIII.

"haps, by this or that name of reproach—
"or, perhaps, the obscure and unknown,
"whose names were never written anywhere
"but in Heaven. I doubt not that there
"were such, living a life of faith and prayer
"and communion with God; overlooked in
"the bustle of cities, and the solitude of
"cottages, and even shut up in what some
"modern systems require us to consider as
"the strongholds of Antichrist—the cell and
"the cloister. I will not shrink from avow-
"ing my belief, that many a tonsured head
"now rests in Abraham's bosom; and that
"many a frail body, bowed down with
"voluntary humility, and wasted with un-
"profitable will-worship—clothed in rags,
"and girt with a bell-rope—was a temple of
"the Holy Ghost; and that one day—a day
"when the follies of system, and the sins of
"party, and man's judgment of his fellows,
"will have come to an end—these, her un-
"known children, will be revealed to the
"astonishment of a church, accustomed to
"look back with a mixture of pride and
"shame to the days of her barrenness. She
"may ask, 'Who hath brought up these?

"Behold I was left alone; these, where have "they been?'—but she will have learned to "know the seal of the living God, she will "embrace them as her sons, and will find "better matter of discourse, than their su- "perstition and her illumination. In the "mean time, however, they are hidden— "perhaps more completely hidden than they "need be, if due pains were taken to look "after them, and gather what might be "known." *

We have happily an instance, to which, without going out of our way, we can refer, in proof that the spirit of sincere and devoted piety may be found in a monk or friar of ancient days. It is that of a Shropshire monk of the twelfth century—Ordericus, the original historian of our county, to whose records we are indebted for some of the facts connected with the early history of Bridgnorth, related in the foregoing pages. In the close of his history he subjoins an account of himself, which breathes throughout a deep-seated humility, and ardent grati-

* Facts and documents, illustrative, &c. of the Albigenses and Waldenses, 1832, p. 45.

tude, which it would be well indeed if we, with our clearer views and larger knowledge, could catch the spirit of. The whole of it is well worthy a perusal, but I can only find room for the concluding passage.

"Thus, thus, O Lord God, Thou who didst "fashion me, and didst breathe into my "nostrils the breath of life, hast Thou, "through these various gradations, imparted "to me Thy gifts, and formed my years to "Thy service. In all the places to which "Thou hast led me, Thou hast caused me to "be beloved, by Thy bounty, not by my "own deserving. For all Thy benefits, O "merciful Father, I thank Thee. I laud "and bless Thee: for my numberless "offences, with tears I implore Thy mercy. "For the praise of Thy unwearied goodness "look upon Thy creature, and blot out all "my sins. Grant me the will to persist in "Thy service, and strength to withstand the "attacks of Satan, till I attain, by Thy "grace, the inheritance of everlasting life. "And what I have prayed for myself, I "pray, O God, for my friends, and well-"wishers. The same also I pray for all the

"faithful: and forasmuch as the efficacy of "our own merits cannot suffice to obtain "those eternal gifts, after which the desires "of the perfect aspire,—

"O Lord God, Almighty Father, Creator "and Ruler of the Angels, Thou true hope, "and eternal blessedness of the righteous, "may the glorious intercession of the Holy "Virgin and Mother Mary, and all Saints, "aid us in Thy sight, with the merits of "our Lord Jesus Christ, Redeemer of all "men, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, "in the Unity of the Holy Ghost, world "without end.*

The concluding passage of this prayer is slightly tinged with that superstition, which afterwards appeared in a still more objectionable form, and now so deeply stains the worship of the Church of Rome with the foul blot of idolatry; but with Ordericus the evil was but superficial, and though it does sully the beauty of his devotion, yet it is not deep enough to hide its intrinsic piety. His godly sincerity is still conspicu-

* Blakeway's History of Shrewsbury, Vol. I, pp. 69, 70.

ous, notwithstanding the error with which it was connected; for, as Milner well observes in his Church History, a measure of superstition is compatible with real godliness. We may hope that there were men of like spirit with Ordericus in the ancient Friary of Bridgnorth, and if so, Christ was not without a witness here, even in the darkness of the middle ages; and His holy name, though pronounced by faltering lips, and a stammering tongue, would bring salvation; and His truth, though taught obscurely and defectively, would be sufficient to guide the feet of wandering sinners into the way of peace, and to conduct the weary and heavy laden to their rest.

The historical notices of Bridgnorth which I have thus brought before the reader, will not, I hope, be considered wholly devoid of interest, at least not by those who are locally connected with the place. They are scanty indeed, but sufficient to shew them that the town, in which it is their lot to live, not only is one whose foundation is of very ancient date, and the Borough belonging to

it one of the earliest in the kingdom, subsequent to the Norman Conquest, but that it has been at times the theatre of events of some importance in history; that the scenes with which they are daily familiar, and which are now comparatively so quiet and peaceful, have again and again been scenes of active warfare, where the besiegers and the besieged have confronted each other in deadly combat, and where, on more than one occasion, the Monarchs of England have appeared in person to vindicate the prerogatives of their crown, and loyalty and rebellion have striven valiantly and fiercely for the mastery. The rude hand of time has indeed swept away almost every memorial of these things, and scarcely a monument is left standing to mark the spot where they occurred; so that they who take their customary walk around the Castle Hill, or stroll along the towing path by the Severn side, see little or nothing to remind them of the furious combats which once signalized these scenes. The hill rises so peacefully in the midst of the valley, that it does not look as if it had ever been the object of a

military assault, nor is it easy to imagine, when we look on the gentle flow of the river, that its waters were ever reddened by human blood. The contrast between what now is, and what has been in other days, is so great, that the beautiful lines which Sir Walter Scott has addressed to the Teviot, might, with little alteration, be accommodated to the Severn:

"Sweet Teviot, on thy silver tide
The glaring bale-fires blaze no more:
No longer steel-clad warriors ride
Along thy wild and willow'd shore:
Where'er thou wind'st, by dale or hill,
All, all is peaceful, all is still,
As if thy waves, since time was born,
Since first they roll'd upon the Tweed,
Had only heard the shepherd's reed,
Nor started at the bugle horn."

Introduction to Canto IV of the Lay of the Last Minstrel.

THE

ANTIQUITIES OF BRIDGNORTH.

PART II.

CHELSEA

QUATFORD.

THE

ANTIQUITIES, &c.

IN the foregoing pages I have brought before the reader many historical notices of Bridgnorth from a very early period down to the reign of Edward III; but I regret that I have been able to collect only a very few from the commencement of that reign to the era of the Reformation, and still fewer between that period and the time of the Civil Wars; but the few which I have been able to collect respecting these intervals, though of minor importance, may not be without their interest, inasmuch as they serve to connect our town, however slightly, with some of the memorable events in English history.

The reign of Edward III. is one of the most brilliant in the annals of England. The military prowess of the nation, directed by the genius and intrepidity of the King himself, and by the youthful heroism of his son Edward, the Black Prince, acquired a fame which has never since been eclipsed. This enterprising monarch had not been many years on the throne before he invaded the territories of France, and there obtained triumphs, so marvellous, when the superiority of the enemy's forces is considered, that the names of his victories, *Cressy and Poictiers*, are "household words" with Englishmen, even in this day. It is very possible that some of the men of Bridgnorth may have taken part in these famous battles; for it appears from a public document, that just before the invasion of France by King Edward, a writ was sent to Bridgnorth, as well as to other towns in Shropshire, for raising a small contingent to the war. In this document it is stated that "Sir Roger de Strange of Knockin, John Aston and others, as chief persons within the County of Salop, were summoned to raise 40 men

at arms, within the said County, and 30 Hobelers within the town of Salop; 10 Hobelers in Ludlow; 6 in Wenlock; 10 in Bridgnorth; 4 in Newport; and 40 in the rest of the County."—*(History of Shrewsbury, p.* 163, *note* 1.*)* The *men at arms* were horsemen who wore a complete suit of armour, and were mounted on strong war horses, answering to our heavy dragoons; the *hobelers* were light-armed horsemen, who rode on "hobbies," or small fleet horses, and were in the armies of the ancient English what the troops of light cavalry are in ours. They served the same purpose for Edward in his French campaign that our light brigade did for us in the famous charge at Balaklava. I do not know whether any man from Bridgnorth was among those gallant 600; but I know that some of our townsmen were exposed to other perils in the Crimean campaign, and met them with a fortitude that did no dishonour to their ancestors, who were enrolled under the banner of the Black Prince.

I have not been able to find out any other fact of any particular interest respecting

Bridgnorth, during the reign of Edward III, except that the Burgesses of the town petitioned him, that they might have the use of his chapel, within the Castle, as a parish church. Hitherto this chapel of Saint Mary Magdalene had been exclusively allotted to the Castle, and perhaps was used solely by the garrison, and Saint Leonard's was the only parochial church belonging to the town; but now, the Burgesses wishing for larger church accommodation, on account perhaps of the increase of population, or for some other cause which made it desirable, laid their petition before the King, that he would grant them the use of his royal chapel. Whether or not they succeeded in their object does not appear.*

About twenty years after this, in the same reign, the population was fearfully diminished by a pestilence, which twice swept over England, as well as the rest of Europe, and which was so destructive in its ravages, that it is computed that a third part of the inhabitants of every county was taken off

* Dukes' Antiquities of Shropshire, Appendix xxxvi.

by it. Shropshire suffered very severely. We have no record of its progress in Bridgnorth; if we had, it would doubtless afford us as many narratives of an interesting, though painful, character, as the visitation of the cholera did a few years since. This fact the historian Walsingham relates, that eighteen out of every twenty in the Friaries and Abbeys fell victims to the disease.* This may be in part accounted for by so many living together in the same house, among whom a contagious disease would be likely to spread with fatal rapidity. Others attribute the remarkable amount of mortality among the ecclesiastics at this time† to their frequent visitations of the sick—their constant intercourse with the diseased and dying. If this be a true account of the matter we may infer that the members of the religious houses in Bridgnorth—who, like their brethren elsewhere, perished in numbers—were thus

* Hume, Vol. 2, p. 423.

† The Diocesan Registers of Lichfield and Hereford shew a very high average of mortality among the Clergy of Shropshire at this period, and these were not exposed to the danger of contagion from the circumstance above referred to.

charitably employed during this visitation, and sacrificed their lives to this ministry of mercy, imparting as far as they were able to do so, the consolations of the Gospel of Christ to the sufferers around them.

On the death of Edward III, the reins of government were committed into the feeble hands of Richard II., who, after a disastrous reign of twenty-two years, (during which I find no historical notice of our town worth mentioning) was deposed by his cousin Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Lancaster. Henry, who assumed the sovereignty, under the title of Henry IV, was frequently in Shropshire, on account of the insurrectionary movements which took place among the Welsh, during the early part of his reign. Under the leadership of the hot-headed and enterprising *Owen Glendwyr*, they ravaged the border counties to a considerable extent; and, in consequence of this, the Council issued an order, that all the Castles on the borders—and Bridgnorth Castle was one of them—should be strengthened and put in a state of defence, to resist the incursions of the rebels. But previously

to this, an act of Parliament had been passed, which had special reference to Bridgnorth, with other towns in our County, forbidding them to allow any one born in Wales, and descended from Welsh parents, to become a member of their corporations, or even to purchase land within the Borough. These restrictions, however severe they may appear, were considered necessary, on account of the spirit of disaffection, which so generally prevailed in the Principality.

But, notwithstanding these civil enactments and military preparations, the cause of the Welsh chieftian continued to gain ground, till it suddenly received unexpected support, from the accession to his party of the Duke of Northumberland, and his valiant son Harry Hotspur, who at the head of a formidable army of English and Scotch, marched towards the borders. He, as quickly as possible, united his forces to those of Glendwyr, and the combined rebel army encountering the royal forces, led on by the King in person, and Henry Prince of Wales, fought a great battle, well known to the readers of English History as the

famous *Battle of Shrewsbury*; for it was fought under the walls of our county town. If we may rely on Shakespeare in this matter, who indeed is often, even in minute circumstances, an excellent historical authority, we may conclude that Bridgnorth was the place appointed by King Henry for the rendezvous of his army on the eve of this great battle. In the first part of the Play of Henry IV, the king is represented as addressing the chief leaders of his army, and giving instructions as to the mustering of his forces, in these words:—

"The Earl of Westmorland set forth to-day;
With him, my son, lord John of Lancaster;
On Wednesday next, Harry, thou shalt set forward;
On Thursday, we ourselves will march:
Our meeting is Bridgnorth: and, Harry, you
Shall march through Glostershire; by which account
Our business valued, some twelve days hence
Our general forces at Bridgnorth shall meet."

If our dramatist had any warrant for this representation, of which I have no doubt, the town of Bridgnorth must have witnessed on this occasion a fine military muster, and have had the privilege of receiving into its

Castle one who has been ranked among the greatest of England's heroes—Henry, Prince of Wales. He was just at that time beginning to emerge from the state of wild and thoughtless profligacy in which he had wasted his early years, and was about to exhibit those qualities, which have since made his name so illustrious in English History. The battle of Shrewsbury, at which he did some service, was very decisive; and the confederate army of the rebels, under Glendwyr, Hotspur, and Douglas, was completely routed. Nevertheless our county continued for years after to be ravaged by the Welsh insurgents, nor was it till the reign of Henry V., when the death of Glendwyr took place, that there was any security for life and property in the Borders.

In the succeeding reign of Henry VI. commenced that most destructive series of Civil Wars, known by the name of the Wars of the Roses, between the rival houses of York and Lancaster, which laid waste for many years the fairest provinces of the land. "It was not finished in less than a course of

"thirty years: was signalized by twelve "pitched battles: opened a scene of extra- "ordinary violence: is computed to have cost "the lives of eighty Princes of the blood, "and to have almost entirely annihilated "the ancient nobility of England."—*History of Shrewsbury, Vol.* 1, *p* 166.

Shropshire was necessarily embroiled in these contests, and I have lighted upon one fact, which shows, I think, that Bridgnorth, as well as the neighbouring town of Shrewsbury, assumed the badge of the *White Rose*, espousing the cause of the house of York. The fact referred to, though a trifling one in itself, seems to me to connect Bridgnorth with the great leader of that party—Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York. This nobleman, who had doubtless a clearer title to the crown of England than the reigning monarch, held the Castle of Ludlow, and was naturally very anxious to associate the people of Shrewsbury with his party, and to make them his adherents. He therefore entered into communication with them; and on one occasion, when a matter of some consequence was to be considered, the Bailiffs of Shrews-

bury appointed a gentleman of Bridgnorth, the representative of this Borough, in company with others, to treat with the Duke at his castle of Ludlow. The following extract from the accounts of the Bailiffs of Shrewsbury, A.D. 1457, refers to this fact:—"Paid "for a breakfast to Thomas Acton and "Thomas Hoord, for their good council, "touching the return of a precept to the "Duke of York, directed to the Bailiffs for "surety of the peace." Again. "Money "paid for the expenses of Thomas Hoord, "and William Lyster, riding to the Lord "Duke of York at Ludlow, to get the said "precept dissolved." *(History of Shrewsbury, Vol.* 1, *p.* 224.*)* This Thomas Acton was of Aldenham, and ancestor to the present baronet of that name; and Thomas Hoord was of *Hoord Park,* now called Park Farm, adjacent to our town, a gentleman of ancient lineage. He was member of Parliament for our Borough, and therefore it is not likely that he would have engaged himself to treat with the Duke of York, if he had not been aware that his constituents at Bridgnorth were well affected to his

party, which was now growing formidable.

I have not had access to any records which shew whether our town took any very active part, or in what measure they suffered in consequence, in this fatal and disastrous strife; but it is scarcely possible that such great battles should have been fought in this and the adjoining counties, as *Mortimer's Cross*, *Tewksbury*, and *Ludlow*, without Bridgnorth being more or less affected by them. I have little doubt that the state of decay and ruin, in which parts of the town were found some years afterwards, is to be traced to these civil contests. This is noticed in an Act of Parliament, passed in the year 1535. It recites that "many "houses, messuages, and tenements of habit- "ation, in the town of Bridgnorth, now are, "and have of a long time been, in great "ruin and decay, and specially in the prin- "cipal and chief streets there being; in the "which chief streets in time passed have "been beautiful dwelling houses there, well "inhabited, which at this day much part "thereof is desolate and void grounds, with "pits, cellars, and vaults lying open and

"uncovered, very perilous for people to go "by in the night, without jeopardy of life, "which things are to the great impoverish- "ing and hindrance of the said town." *(History of Shrewsbury, Vol. 1, p. 318.)*

These wars between the houses of York and Lancaster, which spread such ruin over the land, did not cease till after the battle of Bosworth Field, and the accession of the house of Tudor to the throne, in the person of Henry VII; and with this latter event, a very important one in English history, Bridgnorth was accidentally connected.

The Duke of Buckingham was the chief instrument of raising the Earl of Richmond, afterwards Henry VII, to the throne of England, and this was occasioned, the historian Hall relates,* by a casual circumstance which occurred in the neighbourhood

* The Duke of Buckingham, in his communication with the Bishop of Ely, is represented by Hall, (an historian of the 16th century) as thus expressing himself in reference to this matter:—"But whether God so ordeyned, or by fortune it so chanced, while I was in a mase, other to conclude sodaynlye on thys litte, and to sette it open amongeste the common people, or to kepe it secrete awhile, so the chaunce was I rode between Worcester and Bridgenorth, I encountered wyth the Ladye Margaret, Contesse of Richmond, now wyfe to the Lorde Stanley, whych is

of our town. This Duke had large estates in Shropshire, in consequence of his being the representative of the ancient family of Corbet, and among these he had certain tenements in Bridgnorth. *(Dukes' Antiquities of Shropshire, p.* 31.*)* His possession of this property was perhaps the cause of his visiting our town, in the summer of 1483. It was just at this time that he was plotting the overthrow of the government of Richard III, but feeling uncertain as to the person whom he should endeavour to make sovereign in his stead, when riding one day between Bridgnorth and Kidderminster, he accidentally met the Countess of Richmond, better known by the name of *the Lady Margaret.* This casual interview suggested to his mind the young and enterprising Earl of Richmond, as the fittest heir to the English

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the very daughter and sole heyre to Lorde John, Duke of Somersett, my grandfather's elder brother: whych was a cleare out of my mynde as though I had never seen her; so that she and her sonne the Earle of Richmonde be both bulwarke and portcolies, and the gate to enter into the majestie royall, and gettynge the crowne. And when we had commoned a little concernynge her sonne, as I shall shewe after, and were departed, she to our Ladye of Worcester, and I towards Shrewsburie, I then changed, and in a manner began to dispute wyth myself.—*Chronicle, 2nd yeare of Ric.* III, *fol.* xj.

throne; and he immediately set himself to raise an insurrection in these, and other parts of the kingdom, in his favour. The insurrection succeeded, though Buckingham himself perished in the enterprise; and the Earl of Richmond, became Henry VII, king of England. On so accidental a circumstance depended the accession of the house of Tudor to the English throne, and the consequences, which followed it, so important to the interests of this great empire.

It was during the sovereignty of the house of Tudor that one of the most important events in the history of our country took place, viz., *the Reformation*, commencing in the reign of Henry VIII., and being completed in that of Elizabeth. I greatly regret not having been able to collect any information respecting our town during this eventful and interesting period. One would like to know how it was affected by the great movement which was then taking place, and whether the pulpits of St. Mary's and St. Leonard's were late or early in announcing those glorious truths, which at that time began to stir the depths of people's

minds, and caused such a mighty revolution in the land—whether here, as well as elsewhere, there were men who stood up as fearless defenders of the truth, ready to seal their advocacy of it with their blood. We have no details on the subject; but we learn that the spirit of reformation was awakened in Shropshire as far back as the fourteenth century. A very remarkable Poem of that date, entitled "*The Visions of Piers the Ploughman,*" whose uncouth rhymes seem to have produced a wonderful effect on the popular mind, was written by an inhabitant of the neighbouring town of Cleobury Mortimer. *(History of Salop, p.* 202, *note* 1.*)* We also know that our county town had a courageous advocate of the cause in the reign of Henry IV in William Thorpe; who ascending the pulpit of Saint Chad's, vehemently denounced the errors of the Church of Rome, and in consequence suffered imprisonment. It is not likely that such things should have gone on in the neighbourhood of Bridgnorth without our townspeople being more or less affected by them; but we have no particulars—none, I

mean, that my very limited search could discover—respecting the progress which the Reformation made among them.

There is one document, however, which shews that the accession of Queen Mary was received by the inhabitants of Bridgnorth and its neighbourhood with great demonstrations of joy; but it is of course doubtful whether this resulted from their loyalty to the person of one whom they rightly regarded as the heir to the throne, or from attachment to those religious opinions of which she was known to be a patron. The document I refer to is an extract from the Register of Sir Thomas Boteler, Vicar of Much Wenlock, beginning November 26th, 1538, ending September 20th, 1562. "1553 "Memorandum. That as some say King "Edward VI, by the grace of God, &c., "died the 6th day of this instant month of "July, in the year of our Lord God as it is "above written, and as some say he died on "the 4th of May last preceeding in the same "year of our Lord; and upon Mary Magda-"lene's day, which is the 22nd day of this "instant month, at Bridgnorth in the fair

"there was proclaimed Lady Mary, Queen "of England, &c., after which proclamation "finished, the people made great joy, cast- "ing up their caps and hats, lauding, thank- "ing, and praising God Almighty, with "ringing of bells, and making of bonfires in "every street. And so was she proclaimed "Queen on the same day, and at the Battle "field in the same evening, with the like "joy of the people, and triumphal solemnity "made in Shrewsbury, and also in this "Borough of Much Wenlock."

The Act for the dissolution of Monasteries and other Religious Houses took effect here of course, and consequently the *Friary* and the Hospitals of *St. John* and *St. James* were all suppressed, and their property confiscated. The Brethren of Grey Friars seem at that time to have been in very reduced circumstances, so that the spoils obtained from them were hardly worth the seizure. The King's Commissioners came here on the 5th of August, 1538, and the following note, which was signed by the Bailiffs of the town, shows the indigent condition in which this religious establishment was found—a

plain proof of what little hold at that time the orders of monks and friars had upon the affections of the people. "Memorandum. "This V daye of Auguste, in ye XXX yeare "of Kynge Henry the VIIJth, that Rych- "arde bysehope of Dovor, and vesytor under "the Lorde Prevy Seale for ye Kynge's "grace, was in Bryggenorthe, wher that the "warden and heys Bredren in the presens "of Master Thomas Hall, and Master Ran- "dolphe Rodes, Balys of the sayd towne "gave the howse, with all the purtenans "into the vesytores handdes to the Kynge's "use; for sayd warden and brethren sayd "that they war not abull to live, for the "charyte off the pepulle was so small, that "in IIJ yeares they had not receyvyd in "almes in redy mony to the sum of Xs. by "yere, but only leve by a serves that they "had in the town in a chapell* on the "bryge. Thus the sayd vesytor receyveyd "the sayd howse, with the purtenans to the

* This was a Chapel, built on the piers of the Bridge, dedicated to St Osyth, wife of the king of East Anglia, afterwards Abbess of a Monastic Church in Essex. According to tradition she suffered martyrdom, A.D. 870.—*See Butler, Vol. 2, p. 661.*

"kynge's use, and by indentures delyveryd "yt to us the sayd Balys to kepe to the "kynge's use, till the kynges plesur was "further known. Thys wyttenes we the "sayd balys with other.

"per me Thomam Halle.

"per me Randull Rowdes."

(Wright's History of Ludlow, p. 342.*)*

An incidental proof of the state of penury to which these poor Friars of Bridgnorth were reduced, may be gathered from a note kept among the records of the town of Shrewsbury, of the expenses which were incurred by Roger Thomas, their senior Bailiff, and Thomas Bromley, afterwards Lord Chancellor, in a journey which they made from Shrewsbury to Bewdley on important business. On their return they stopped at Bridgnorth, and had their dinner at the principal inn, and this is the note of their expenses:—"Dener at Bruggenorth 3s. 4d.; to Shepay the frere 1d." This Shepay was no doubt a member of the Grey Friars, who waited upon the travellers at their inn, to beg alms for his house. *(History of Shrewsbury, p.* 302.*)*

It might have been expected that when Queen Mary came to the throne she would have restored all the religious houses in England to their original use; but on the contrary, pressed by strong political motives, she confirmed by her own acts the confiscation, which had been made in the reign of Henry VIII., of the property belonging to them; and thus under a Popish sovereign it became irrecoverably alienated from the Church. *

The Hospital of St. James, Bridgnorth, affords a striking example of this. In the year 1566, the Queen, in conjunction with her husband Philip, made over to Sir J. Parrott, in consideration of £184 15s., and for his faithful services, all the property belonging to this Hospital.† In the year following, Sir J. Parrott transferred the same to Mr. R. Smith of Morville. In the following reign of Elizabeth, it was transferred to William Tupper and Robert Dawes; and the property, after passing through the various families of Smith, Dovy,

* Appendix E.

† Dukes' Antiquities, Appendix IX.

Kinnersly, Nevitt, Tyner, and Bach, came into the family of *Stanier*, and now, by another turn in the wheel of time, the name of *Smith* is again connected with the property. There was an order in Council at one time, that this estate should pay to Bridgnorth Church a yearly sum of twenty nobles —equal to £6 13s. 4d. This order was lost out of the town chest, and afterwards recovered; but in one of the wars it was burnt, after which the property rendered nothing but a pound of frankincense every Easter, to be burnt in the Church of the High Town: but this last customary payment has long been discontinued.

What may have been the value of this pound of frankincense I do not know, but whatever it may have been, it is certain that the Incumbents of Bridgnorth receive from the present owners of St. James's, in their liberal support of the religious institutions of the town, something far more valuable than this former impost upon their property.

We now enter on the era of Elizabeth. There is perhaps no period in the history

of our country to which Englishmen are accustomed to look back with more satisfaction. Whatever may have been her faults and foibles as a woman, she was undoubtedly a great Queen, and swayed the sceptre of this realm with such a steady and vigorous hand, as made her revered by her subjects, and dreaded by her enemies. She contributed more perhaps than any sovereign that preceded her, to raise the character of our country, and place it high in the scale of European nations. Besides, she was under God, the great means of strengthening the cause of the reformed faith, and resisting the colossal power of the Church of Rome.

It would have been very gratifying to find any record which would have connected the history of our town with the public events which took place in the reign of this great princess; but I have not been able to find any, none at least but what are of a very trivial nature. I find, for instance, that in the singular proclamation which she issued, for the purpose of compelling every one in her realm to wear *woollen caps*, except

the nobility, she mentions Bridgnorth, as a place where the company of cappers used to flourish;* which seems to indicate that the people now enjoyed a considerable share of quietness, and were acquiring wealth by their trade and industry. Again I find that when her great favorite, the Earl of Leicester, visited Shrewsbury, and where preparations were made to receive him with an honour, little short of that which would have been offered to the Queen herself, one of the three who were appointed to address him on the occasion, was a Bridgnorth youth, Richard Hoord, son of John Hoord, of Hoord Park; no slight distinction, considering the almost royal dignity which was attached to the person of the Earl of Leicester. But it is only in circumstances of this nature, and not in matters of weightier import, that I can find any reference to Bridgnorth in this reign. I ought not however to be disappointed at this, for one who had far better opportunity for making researches of this kind, than I have, and far greater aptitude for the task, has stated that "from

* Appendix F.

the 27th year of Henry VIII till the year 1629, he could discover no historical notice of the Town or Castle of Bridgnorth.*

This latter date brings us to a very remarkable period in the history of our town. In that year, viz, the 4th of King Charles I, and on the 2nd day of October, the King made a grant of the Castle, to Gilbert North, Esq., one of the Gentlemen of the Privy Bed Chamber. It had been a royal castle from the time that it was taken by Henry I. from Robert de Belesme—a period of more than five hundred years. But now, perhaps on account of the cost of keeping it in repair, it was transferred to the possession of a gentleman belonging to the King's household, who by a subsequent deed of the same year, transferred it to Sir William Whitmore, Knight, in whose family it has continued ever since. † It is indeed greatly to be regretted that its present possessor should have so small a remnant of it to call his own, and that the leaning tower on Castle Hill, as it is popularly called, should

* The late Mr. Hardwick.

† Apley MSS.

be all that is left of this once noble fortress of the middle ages. But how it came to be thus reduced to utter ruin, is the subject which must now occupy our attention; and it is one which is intimately connected with the stirring events of that period.

At the time in which Bridgnorth Castle was transferred to the Whitmore family, the nation was in a great state of political disquietude. The King was disposed to carry his royal prerogative beyond the limit which the law had assigned to it; and many members of the Houses of Parliament in resisting the encroachment, were tempted to invade the rights of legitimate authority, and became in the struggle fierce and unrelenting enemies to the Crown. This contest of prerogative on the one hand, and the spirit of liberty on the other, brought about the Great Rebellion; and this fair land was once more destined to be the scene of civil strife, in which was shed the best and noblest blood of England. Of the two parties into which our countrymen were then divided, the Royalists and Roundheads, it is not my province to say much; I know

to which of the two, had I lived at the time, my feelings and principles would have attached me; yet I feel bound to acknowledge, that while I regard some of the opinions and some of the acts of the insurgent party with a feeling nothing short of abhorrence, there were among them, both among their soldiers and their divines, men of the highest character, and whose minds were cast in the finest mould; nor am I unwilling to allow that England is in a great measure indebted to this party for the present freedom of her institutions.* Respecting, however, the great leader of the party, Oliver Cromwell, I cannot agree with some late writers, who have endeavoured to canonize his memory, and who try to represent him as a pure and unselfish patriot. He was indeed a man of great qualities, of fearless fortitude, and untiring energy; and perhaps at the commencement of his public course he was upright and single hearted in his intentions: but there can be no question

* See the whole subject treated very ably by Professor Smyth, of Cambridge, in his Lectures on Modern History, Vol. 1, Lect. xiv.

of it, that he became ambitious of earthly power; and the religious phraseology, which was once perhaps the sincere expression of his feelings, he afterwards employed as a crafty instrument to further his designs, and to conceal their evil character.* Nor must we, if we would form a just estimate of him, lose sight of the fact that while he was a subject he was an enthusiast on the side of liberty, but when he himself was placed on the seat of power, no Stuart or Plantagenet was ever more despotic in his rule.

In this great intestine struggle, the inhabitants of Bridgnorth, as was natural from their hereditary loyalty, espoused heartily the cause of Charles I., as that of their legitimate sovereign; and suffered severely for their allegiance. In the year 1642, preparations were made throughout

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* The Cambridge Professor of History, though a strong advocate of the cause of liberty in opposition to prerogative, thus writes of Cromwell:—"Cromwell had to subdue not only the Royalists, but the Presbyterians; and this not merely by force, but by the most extraordinary performance of cant and hypocrisy that human nature ever exhibited."—*Vol.* 1, *Lect.* XVII.†

† Vide Appendix G.

the country for the commencement of hostilities; and in consequence, the authorities here thought it necessary to put the town, as far as possible, in a state of defence: and the Corporation have still in their possession some interesting records, containing the Common Hall orders which were made on this occasion. The first is as follows:—

"Bridgnorth. At a Comon Hall in the said "towne, the XXVI day of August, A°. R. "Caroli Angl, &c., XVIII° A° D^ni. 1642, "John Harryson and Robert Richards, "Gents, being Bailiffs.

"*Concerninge the makinge of a draw "Bridge upon the Bridg over Severn in "Bridgnorth aforesaid, and other things "for the defence of the said towne, upon a "warrant from John Weld, Esq., High "Sheriff of this county of Salop, in respect "of the extreame danger which is now come "neare unto us.*

"It is agreed, That the makinge of a "draw Bridge shall be respited untill "further consideration; and that for the "present necessity, Posts and Chaines "shall be made at the two ends of the

"Low Towne, viz., At the farther end of "the Mill Strette, and at the farther end "of St. John's Streete, and at other need- "fule places in the said Towne; and also "that the Gates of the said Towne shall "be repayred, and made stronge with "chaynes and otherwise, as shall be con- "venient for strength and defence of the "said Towne."

But very early in the year, the Bailiffs had projected another means of defence. They had petitioned Thomas Corbett, Esq., of Longnor, in this county, to exercise the young men of the town, and of the immediate neighbourhood, in the practice of arms and military tactics, that so they might be ready to repel any attack which might be suddenly made by the rebel forces. The following is the letter which Mr. Corbett addressed to Sir Francis Ottley, Governor of Shrewsbury, on this occasion :—

"1642. Noble Sir,

The Bayliffs of Bridgnorth, in behalf of the town, having been importunate with me to take upon me the exercising of the young men in this town, and others in the country neare adjoining, for the defence of the towne upon any

needfull design, I have been persuaded by them to take the same upon me; and they having shewn me a letter which they intend to present unto the high Sheriff, for a warrant unto me in that behalf, I pray be pleased to consider thereto, and impart your advice unto me, and further Mr. Sheriff's directions therein, as you in your wisdom shall think most convenient, and you will oblige

Your respective kinsman,
and friend who truly
Honoureth you,
THOS. CORBETT.

Bridgnorth, 5 Feb., 1642.

To my noble friend and kinsman Sir Francis Ottly, Knight, at Shrewsbury House." *(Blakeway Papers, Bodleian Lib.)*

No time indeed was to be lost, for four days before the date of the order above referred to, the King had set up his standard at Nottingham, and the parliamentary forces were in the field, under the command of the Earl of Essex. On the 20th of the following month, the King removed into this county, and Clarendon states, that "a more general and passionate expression of affection cannot be imagined, than he received by the people of Shropshire, or a better reception than he met at Shrewsbury." *(History of the Rebellion, Vol. 2, p. 18.)* But on

his march thither he heard of the rebel army advancing towards Worcester, and in order to watch their motions, and if possible to check their progress, he dispatched his nephew Prince Rupert with all his horse across the Severn; and it was most likely on his return from this expedition, that the Prince passed through our town, and took up his residence for the night at *Cann Hall*. He had conducted the expedition with that intrepid gallantry which characterized all his military movements; he had with a handful of men attacked a large body of the enemy as they were defiling out of a narrow lane near the city of Worcester, and completely routed them in the first onset, slaying several of their number, and taking the commanding officer prisoner; *(History of the Rebellion, Vol. 2, p. 25)* so that he came to Bridgnorth, flushed with the first victory which was gained in these civil wars. While he was here he addressed a letter to the Jury appointed to choose a Bailiff, dated September, 21st, 1642. It is as follows:—

"You Gentlemen of the Jury, who are to have voices in this election, these are to entreat

you, out of a tender care both of his Majesty's service and your own happiness and welfare, that in the present election you make choice of such men for your Bailiffs as you are sure are well affected for his Majesty's service. By which you will oblige me to remain,

Your Loving Friend,
RUPERT.

The Bailiffs chosen were Thomas Dudley and John Farr, ancestors most likely of some of our townsmen who now bear these names; and there is no doubt, from the choice made of them at this critical time, that they possessed those qualifications for being Chief Magistrates of the Borough which Prince Rupert described.

On the 12th of October the King left Shrewsbury, and quartered for the night at Bridgnorth, where, Clarendon observes, "there was a rendezvous of the whole army, which appeared very cheerful." [*Vol.* 2, *p.* 42.] Here the king stayed three days; and I am one of those who feel, that our town and Castle were never so honoured by a royal visit as on this occasion. Many of the Monarchs of England have been here; many crowned heads have entered the portals of our Castle, and rested within its

walls—Normans, Plantagenets, and Lancastrians—but to none of them, in my mind, attaches the same deep interest, and to none is due the same tribute of veneration, as to this unhappy monarch of the House of Stuart. Not only was he by far the most accomplished Prince that ever sat on the English throne, and endowed with considerable intellectual powers,* as his successful controversy with Henderson, the Presbyterian Minister, clearly proved; but he was distinguished in all the relations of private life by the highest moral principle: by a purity, fidelity, and love, which are rarely seen in king's courts, and have seldom been equalled in retired domestic circles; and these virtues in him were combined with a deep-seated reverence for religion. He was

* In proof of the intellectual power of Charles, additional to that of his successful controversy with Henderson, the following statement may be given in the words of Mr Tytler:—"In the two months' negotiations which followed, Charles, unassisted, carried on a contest of argument on arduous political topics with these fifteen of the ablest senators of the day; and the commissioners were not more struck with the ravages which persecution and suffering had wrought in his appearance, (his hair had become entirely grey) than with the clearness of intellect, the readiness of elocution, and the dignity of deportment, which he displayed at these important conferences."—*Trials of Charles I., p.* 8.

not blameless in his public conduct; far from it. There was a weakness and want of stability in him, which justly exposed him to the charge of inconstancy, if not of insincerity. He was subtle and evasive, and it may be at times, under the pressure of very trying circumstances, disingenuous in his transactions with his opponents, so that they complained that they could not depend upon him. But he was refined in the furnace of affliction. "Sweet" to him, as they have been to others, were "the uses of adversity"; so that when his end drew nigh,* there appeared in him, as his enemies allow,

* The conduct and demeanour of Charles, at his trial, and on the scaffold, have drawn even from the pen of Mr. Macaulay a passage expressive of his admiration, and a passage so eloquent as to shine even in his brilliant pages. But it is not more just, perhaps not more eloquent, than the following description which is given of Charles in the hour of adversity, by Professor Smyth:—"With what sentiment do we now behold him?....it is the monarch unsubdued by adversity—it is the hero unappalled by death—it is the Christian sublimed by piety and hope—it is these that occupy our imagination and our memory. It is the tribunal of violence—it is the scaffold of blood—that banish from our minds all indignation but against his destroyers—all terrors but of the licentiousness of the people: that render all regular estimation of his character odious and impossible; and that leave nothing in the heart of the generous and humane, but compassion for his misfortunes, and reverence for his virtues."—*Lectures on Modern History, Vol.* 1, *p.* 441.

a calm heroic fortitude—a saintly magnanimity—a firmness, combined with a gentleness and forgiving love—which we do not often find surpassed even in the early Martyrologies. No memorial then connected with our Castle, is to me of equal interest to that of its having been occasionally, during his declining fortunes, the residence of Charles I.

It was on one of these visits that he passed that eulogium, so well known, and, in the opinion of many, so well deserved, on our Castle Walk; namely, that it was the finest walk in his dominions. We can easily picture him to our minds, (for there is no King with whose lineaments we seem to be so familiar, in consequence of the many inimitable paintings of him by Vandyke) we can easily picture him, with measured step and pensive aspect, taking his walk along this terrace, and his face for a moment lighted up with pleasure at the fair scene which burst upon him; each step as he advanced bringing into view some new and striking object—the bold front of the High Rock—the wooded declivities of Apley

—the graceful winding of the Severn, with its "margent green," and the sloping uplands on either side of it. But he could not give free indulgence to such pleasurable emotions, for a heavy burden of care lay upon his mind, which did not admit of his thoughts being long diverted to anything else.

He left Bridgnorth on the 15th of October, and eight days after was fought the famous Battle of Edge Hill,* in Warwickshire, where, if it had not been for the fiery impetuosity of Prince Rupert, such a signal victory might have been gained by the King over the forces of the rebels, as to

* It appears that the King was exposed to great personal hazard in this battle, and owed his deliverance to the prompt and intrepid conduct of Adam Hill, Esq., of Spaldwick. When Prince Rupert, by his rash pursuit of the enemy's cavalry, had thrown the royal army into a state of disorder, the King was at one time in danger of being taken prisoner, when this brave officer, by rallying a troop of horse, of which he was in command, checked the advance of the enemy, and thus averted the King's danger. Charles shewed his sense of this gallant feat of arms, and his gratitude for this service, by investing him on the field of battle with his own royal scarf. This gorgeous scarf, the material and workmanship of which is peculiarly beautiful, having descended as an heirloom to Peter Denny, a grandson of Adam Hill's by his daughter Cordelia, is now in the possession of Sir Edward Denny, Bart, of Tralee.—"*Royal Presents to the Denny's*" *by Rev. A. B. Rowan, p.* 3.

decide the fate of the campaign in his favour. Then followed the taking of Banbury Castle, the march of the King's army to Oxford and Reading, and the capture of the town of Marlborough. These military operations in different parts of the country convinced the authorities of Bridgnorth of the necessity of making further preparations for the defence of the town, and we find a Common Hall order was passed for this purpose, dated November 29th, 1642:—"Watch and "ward shall be duly set day and night in "all convenient places of the towne where "the Bayliffs shall think fit, and the open "places within the said towne to be made "up as the Bailiffs shall find expedient; and "such as are minded for their own safety, "and the safety of the towne, to bear arms, "they are desired with all convenient ex-"pedition to provide arms at the general "charge of the towne."

But in the beginning of the next year they deemed it necessary to introduce a few horse soldiers into the town, as appears from a Common Hall order, dated January 25th, 1643; by which it was agreed that

nine dragoons should be maintained at the general charge of the said town. Towards the charge of the said nine dragoons, it is stated that Mr. Thomas Corbett undertook to lend a horse and provide a rider, so that the town should bear the charge of the horse and rider. Thomas Glover undertook to provide two horses, saddles, and bridles, at 1s. per day for the hire of each horse. Several other persons furnished a horse and sword, and a bandolier each. Captains of the watch and ward were appointed, with orders that the said watch and ward be from Six o'clock in the morning until Six o'clock in the evening, and from Six o'clock in the evening until Six o'clock in the morning; and it was appointed that eight men should watch in the night, and six men in the day.

In the beginning of this year, the King had made Lord Capel, Lieutenant Governour of our county, than whom there is not one in either party during those troubled times that bore a more honoured name—a loyal-hearted servant of the crown—a dutiful and devout member of the Church of England—one of the firmest, as well as noblest, cham-

pions that the royal cause could boast of.* While exercising his function as Lieutenant Governor of Shropshire, he was not unmindful of so important a post as Bridgnorth, but adopted means for its security, as we find by an order of the Common Hall, of May 23rd, 1643:—"The Right Honorable "the Lord Capel, Lieutenant General to the "Prince his Highness, of his Majesty's "forces in the countyes of Worcester, Salop, "and Chester, and the six northern countyes "of Wales, hath appointed Sir Thomas "Wolrich, Knight and Bart., to draw his "forces of the trayned band of this county "which are under his command, to this "towne and neighbourhood hereabouts of "Bridgnorth; it is agreed that fortifications "be made in all fords and places about this "towne, and the liberties thereof, where the "said Thomas Wolrich shall think good to

* Clarendon, who has given a sketch of the character of this cavalier, and an affecting account of his execution, and of the christian courage with which he submitted to it, thus sums up his description of him:—"In a word, he was a man, that whoever shall after him deserve best of the English nation, he can never think himself undervalued when he shall hear that his courage, virtue, and fidelity is laid in the balance with, and compared to that of Lord Capel."..*Vol.* III, *p.* 273.

"appoint, and that all the men of this "towne shall come themselves, or send la- "bourers to this work, with all speed; unto "which work Edward Cressett, Esq., and "Edward Acton, Esq., justices of peace "of the said county, being present, do pro- "mise to send labourers and workmen out of "the country. Secondly, whosoever has vol- "unteered will bear arms for the defence of "this towne, and the neighbourhood here- "abouts, shall be listed, and attend the "service of training weekly, upon every "Tuesday, to be exercised therein, whose "teaching and training for that service "Lieutenant Billingsley (at the towne's "entreaty) is pleased to undertake."

The year 1644 was a disastrous one to the royal cause, in consequence of the signal victory, which Cromwell gained over Prince Rupert at Marston Moor, July 2nd; and the following year opened very gloomily on the fortunes of the king; but the people of Bridgnorth did not desert the cause of their sovereign, though recent events had proved it to be a failing one, but they made further preparations for resisting the insur-

gents, and for holding out against them.

It appears that a Committee had been formed for the purpose of hastening forward the works, and for putting the town in as good a posture of defence as the circumstances would allow. The following is a copy of another order made by them, dated May 21st, 1645:—

"Commissioners present,

"Sir Lewis Kirke, Governor.

"Sir Edward Acton, Bart.

"Edward Cressett, Esq.

"Francis Billingsley, Lieutenant Colonel.

"Thomas Wynde, Lieutenant Colonel.

"John Bromley, Esq.

"Arthur Weaver.

"Edward Latham.

"It is ordered that with all convenient "speed Colonel Billingsley shall place sol- "diers and arms in the North Gate, in "Whitburn and in the Hungry Gates, and "that the barns without the works be pulled "down, and that the prisoners who are "there be taken thence and disposed of "elsewhere, by Mr. Bailiffs, and that the "Towne Walls on both sides North Gate,

"and the works about the towne, be pre-
"sently made up, and the Towne Hall and
"New House pulled down, and for the

The West (or Hungry) Gate.
From a Sketch in the Bodleian Library.

"making of the said wall the treasurer to
"lay out money not exceeding £10 for
"workmen, to be repaid out of the first
"money raised out of the delinquents' Es-
"tates. *Copia vera.*"

On the 10th of June there was a further order on the subject. "At a Comon Hall "it was agreed that the Chamberlain of the "towne should cause the Towne Hall to be "taken down with all convenient speed ac- "cording to the foregoing order from Sir "Lewis Kirke, governor of the said towne, "and other above-named Commissioners, "and that the Chamberlain shall make sale "thereof for the most benefit of the towne, "and what they cannot sell thereof, to "cause the timber which shall remain to be "carried into the church, there to remain "until further use shall be for the same "for the towne. And the New House is in "the like manner to be taken down if needs "require. And it is further also agreed "that the Towne's Bonds and writings con- "cerning the towne, which are in the "New House, shall be left with the Towne "Clerk, or in any other place which the "Bailiffs and he shall think fit. And if "they shall happen to be taken from them "the towne is to bear the loss of them, and "not they, because they are not able to "warrant them, nor anything else that they

"have of their own, as it is very well known "both to the towne and country, whereof "they are all very sensible, this towne being "every day in danger of being taken." The Town Hall, which, as it appears by a deed, dated Oct. 20th, 1645, stood upon the site of the old Poor House, of St. Leonard's Parish, outside the North Gate, was accordingly pulled down forthwith, and in the month following, July, 1645, the New House was also pulled down. [*Apley Papers.*]

Four days after the date of this order, was fought another great battle, at Naseby in Northamptonshire—fatal to the fortunes of the King; for here again, through the impetuous and fiery temper of Prince Rupert, who could brook no delay when an enemy was in sight, and listen to no counsel that was not prompted by a spirit as daring as his own, the King's troops were hurried on prematurely to the attack, and though they displayed a courage worthy of the Cavalier who led them, they were eventually routed, and suffered a signal defeat. All the cannon, ammunition, and baggage, were taken, and the whole of the infantry made

prisoners. The King in person had the command of the main body, and, as Whitelock observes, "displayed in this action all the conduct of a prudent general, and all the valour of a stout soldier;" [*Hume, Vol.* VII, *p.* 54.] but he was forced at last by the solicitations of his friends to retire, leaving the insurgents masters of the field. He retreated to Lichfield, thence to Bewdley, thence to Raglan and Chepstow Castles, and afterwards to Wales, uncertain as to the best place for collecting the remnant of his army, and for providing for his own personal safety.

But an incident took place at Bridgnorth, about a month after the Battle of Naseby, which might have changed the whole aspect of the affairs of the kingdom, and restored Charles to the throne; but Providence designed it otherwise. Cromwell was near meeting his death beneath the walls of our town; and if the Bridgnorth soldier had been a little better marksman, we should never have heard of the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, or possibly of the Commonwealth of England.

The account of this incident may be found among the *Blakeway Papers*, in the Bodleian Library, and is as follows:—"1645. Week-"ly Account. Tuesday, July 15th. Lieu-"tenant General Cromwell riding within "twice pistole shot of the town of Bridg-"north, on Friday last, to view it, making "some stand to speak with his officers that "were with him, a brace of musquet bul-"letts, shot from the enemies works, hit a "Cornet of his regiment with whom the "Lieutenant General was then talking, but "blessed be God the person aimed at es-"caped without any hurt."

Amidst the disaffection which prevailed at this time in so many parts of the king-dom, Shropshire still continued firm in its allegiance to the King; and therefore it was thought advisable, when he was about to take up his winter quarters at Worcester, that he should pass through our county, as affording him the safest line of march; and this route brought him again to Bridgnorth. It is thus noticed by Clarendon:—"Prince "Maurice waited on his Majesty, [at Den-"bigh] with 800 horse. And now being

"thus strengthened, they less apprehend "the enemy; yet continued their march "without resting, till fording the Severn, "they came to Bridgnorth, the place de- "signed." *(Vol. 2, p. 714.)* There are also several entries in a Diary, called "*Iter Carolinum*," which state that Charles was here occasionally about the same time; but it is not easy to make out an exact correspondence between the dates which it gives, and those referred to by Clarendon. The Diary, which is one of much interest, bears the following title:—"Iter Carolinum: being a succint relation of the necessitated marches, retreats, and sufferings of his Majesty Charles the First, from Jan. 1641, till the time of his death in 1648. Collected by a daily attendant upon his sacred Majesty during all the said time."* From this Diary I have copied the following entries:—

"*October* 12, 1642. To Bridgnorth."

"August, 1645."

"*Wednesday, the 6th.* To Gurnevil. Sir "Henry Williams'. Dinner.

* This tract is printed in Gutch's Collectanea Curiosa. Oxford 1781. The Author, John Thomas Manby.

"Supper, Yeoman's House. 18 miles.
"The Court dispersed."

"*Thursday, the 7th.* To Ludlow Castle to "dinner. Colonel Woodhouse. 14 miles."

"*Friday, the Great Fast, the 8th.* To Bridg- "north, Sir Lewis Kirke, Governor. 14 "miles."

"*Sunday, the 10th.* Dinner near Wolver- "hampton, in campis. At Litchfield sup- "per, the Governor's in the Close. 22 "miles."

"September, 1645."

"*Monday, the 29th.* Dinner at Chirk Cas- "tle. Supper at Halton, in Montgomery- "shire. Mr. Lloyd's. 26 miles."

"*Tuesday, the last.* in camp. Sup- "per at Bridgnorth. the Governor's. 30 "miles."

The King on this occasion staid here two nights, and on Thursday, the 2nd. of October, moved to Lichfield, stopping for dinner on the way at Rudge Heath.

In the Diary* kept by Captain Sym-

* This MS. Diary, which is in the British Museum, is entitled "A Continuation of the Marches and Actions of the Royall Army, His Majestie being personally present. From the 17 of August, 1645. Liber Ricardi Symonds."

monds, which has already been referred to, there are entries which afford additional proof of King Charles being at Bridgnorth, at different intervals during this critical juncture, and of our town being a scene of much military bustle at the time.

"*Sunday, September 28th.* About One of "the Clock, Afternoon, ye King marched "through Ruthvyn, where there is a "large castle, and fortified, to Chirk Cas- "tle, County of Denbigh. Here Prince "Maurice mett us with his troupe, and "those of Prince Rupert's horse that "came from Bristoll. His horse in t^o^ 6 "or 700."

"*Munday, 29th. September.* To Llandicilio "and Llandernes, Co. Montgommery."

"*Tuesday.* From thence early at day breake "marched, leaving Shrewsbury [at this time in the hands of the rebels] 3 myle "on the left hand: that night, late and "tediously, to Bridgnorth; ye rear guard "gott to Wenlock Magna, Com, Salop. "In this march, 3 or 4 alarmes by "Shrewsbury horse, and 5 or 6 of them "crosst the way, and killed and tooke

"some." *(p. 59.)*

"*Thursday, October 2nd.* Ye King marched "to Lichfield. This day Generall Goard's "Regiment returned from the Rendevous, "quite tired, to have some refreshments "under Bridgnorth garrison. Ego etiam." *(p. 60.)*

"20*th. October.* Sevrall Colonels with their "Regiments were in Bridgnorth:

"Foot.

"Sir Lewis Kirke's Governor.

"Col. Jo. Corbett's.

"Col. Billingsley's, ye trayned band and "his Regiment in the town.

"Col. Sir Mich. Earnley's one company "of ym.

"Sir Cha. Lloyd's, come here from ye "Devises.

"Foot, about in all, of all sorts, 260.

"Horse.

"Sir Fra. Ottley, ye High Sheriff.

"Sir Edw. Acton. 10.

"Governor's troope. 60.

"Horse not 100."

"*Wednesday, October 22nd.* Lieut. Col. "Slaugher marched out of Bridgnorth

"about 2 of ye Clock, afternoon. Gover-
"nor's troop, commanded by Cap. Singe,
"40. That night by 8 to High Arcall.
"Thence marched, 30 horse and 20 drag.
"with us, about 12 of ye Clock that
"night. By 9 next day to Chirk."

"*Thursday, December* 18*th.* Sir W. V. drew
"out the horse he had with him afore,
"and some from Dudley and Ludlow.
"6 or 700 horse, commanded by Col.
"Smyth. Horse 5 or 600. Marched
"from Bridgnorth, and had a Rendevous
"towards S. Friday morning came in-
"telligence to Bridgnorth that Hereford
"was lost." *

There are extant two letters † of King

* In this Diary there are two or three curious entries, which, though not referring to any matter of public importance, it may be as well to transcribe: one, detailing a singular occurrence, is connected with a name well known in Bridgnorth. "Monday, Oct. 13. Captn. *Gatacre*, of this County, (Salop) killed in Bridgnorth by a Quarter Master, and the Quarter Master killed too by him." "Friday, Oct. 17. A Scott was tryed at Bridgenorth, at a Council of Warre, that he put on his hatt before his Majestie, and being reprehend for it by the Govr., he told them he was equal to all but the Govr., and they committed him for it."

† I am indebted to Mrs. Stackhouse Acton for the copy of these two letters of King Charles's. They are found in an 8vo. Vol. of King Charles's letters to his Secretary Nicholas, in which the ciphers are explained as above.

Charles's, written to his Secretary Nicholas, from Bridgnorth. They contain nothing of any great moment; but the fact of their being written from our town, under the peculiar circumstances in which he was then placed, invests them with a certain degree of interest. The first is dated October 1st.: the year is not given, but it was most probably 1642,* as we find from the "*Iter Carolinum*" that he was here in the October of that year.

"Bridgenorthe, 1st. Oct.

Nicholas,

None of the letters have hitherto miscarried, this day having receaved ye 12th. by Pyteford, and shall at the tyme more insist upon letting you know of my desynes, and giving you directions, than in answers, having commanded your fellow Secretary to supply that. First then, (that you

---

I owe to her kindness also my acquaintance with the "Iter Carolinum" and "Symmonds' Diary."

* The only difficulty that there is in assigning to this letter the date of October, 1642, is that the king speaks in it of Lord Goring being in command of his horse; whereas, we learn from Whitelock, that Lord Goring, in the Autumn of that year, took ship from Portsmouth, where he was closely besieged by the Parliamentary army, and fled to Holland. *(Memorials, p. 62.)* But Whitelock does not give the exact date of the siege of Portsmouth, so that the King may have written this letter to his Secretary Nicholas from Bridgnorth, before it took place, or at least before he had received any tidings of it.

may know whether to send to me) I intend my course towards Newarke, where I shall take further resolutions, according to occasions. Understanding that my horse, under Goring, is likely to be 224 (either) 173 (beaten) or 36 : 3 : 380. (starved) where they are: I have comand him to breake through to me. Now they must passe by or near Oxen, when my pleasure is 288 : 110 . 232 . 226 : 443 (that) opportunity 290 : 264 (you) 125 : 231 : 541 : 290 : 213 (take) : for since it is the fashion (that) to 314 : 54 (yielde) : basely, none can blame me (townes) for venturing my children in an army, rather than to be besieged. I have no more to say, but that I approve of all ye advyse in your last, and meanes to follow them. One of the enclosed is for 247 (Queen) : 231 (of) : 360. (England) The other speakes itself; so I rest,

C. R."

The other letter was written three years later by the King to his Secretary, the day after his arrival at Bridgnorth, on his march from Ludlow to Lichfield.

"Bridgenorth, 9th. August, 1645.

Nicholas,

This morning I receaved yrs of the 30th. of July, which requyres no answer, but thankes for yr often advertisements: and particularly for those which are of moste freedome. In answer to which, I shall desyre you (with ye lyke freeness) to take heede that 358 : 376 (Digby's) make not much of suspicion * * * * * for 174 : 111 : 29 : 18 : 115 (I) ceale 148 (cannot) (con) (from)

yᵉ that
316 : 276 : 358. [erased] perfectly—and all that are believed to be his particular friends; and I assure you that there is no dispatch yet come to me from —— For newes I refer you to your friendes, only I must tell you that tomorrow I intend to march to Lichfield, and so to Newarke ye next day; but if ye Irish be come, then I turne to Chester. My laste was from Cardiffe, which was written in such haste, that I forgot to bid you sende me worde (which now I earnestly desyre you not to forget to doe) how my printed letters, &c., have been receaved at Oxfd. by the severall sorts of people, according to their dyverse humours. This is all at this tyme from yrs

C. R."

Soon after the date of this letter, the King set out for Newark, from whence, after a while, he retreated towards Oxford, where he arrived on the 7th. of November, "having finished," as Clarendon writes, "the most tedious and grievous march that "ever King was exercised in: having been "almost in perpetual motion from the loss "of the Battle of Naseby to this hour, with "such a variety of dismal accidents, as must "have broken the spirits of any man who "was not truly magnanimous." *(Vol. 2, p. 713.)*

While the King was being exposed to

these personal hazards and distresses, many towns and cities in his interest, in different parts of the country, had been obliged to submit to the parliament, and among these Bridgnorth; which, after a vigorous resistance, and holding out boldly for three weeks, was compelled at length to surrender.

It appears, however, that long previous to the final siege and capture of Bridgnorth, the rebels had on one occasion got possession of it for a short time. The following letter, which refers to this fact, and which describes a sharp encounter between the rebel and royalist forces, will be read with some interest; though it is probable that the facts are somewhat distorted by the strong party feeling of the writer.

"1642, Oct. 5. Letter from Bridgnorth to Dudley Norton.

Exceeding joyful news from his Ex. Earl of E.

Sir,

Having received so many favors from you in this kinde, I have thought it requisite to inform you what hath happened here at Bridgnorth since my last letter. His E. his Qr. Master General came hither on Sunday, the 2 of Octr.* and by virtue of a Commission from his Ex. provided billeting

* If the right date has been assigned to the first letter of King Charles', given above, he must have left the town

for 10 regiments of horse, and near 6000 foot, with us and in our neighbour villages. Now, by the way, I must inform you that a great many having been lately oppressed by his Majesty's forces, seemed somewhat unwilling to give entertainment to any more souldiers, but to be short they must do it, or else deservedly suffer under the censure of a malignant party, and so be in danger of having their houses plundered by souldiers, who take upon them to execute justice without or feare or law, or religion, esteeming all those papists, or favourers of papists that doe not desist from countenancing such uncivil actions, but deny to be assistant in the performance; wherefore, after the necessity was well examined, they were resolved rather to put all into the hands of Almighty God, then any way to seem averse, which would not only bring ruine to the estate, but presents. [*sic.*]

On Thursday, at night, we expected his Ex. would have made Bridgnorth his quarters, but before noone we heard the echoing notes of the shrill trumpet, which caused to think his Ex. had been neare, but having sent out scouts to descry the truth, and give us notice, they brought us word that Duke Maurice, the Lord Strange, Marquisse Hartford, the Lord Paulet, M. Hastings, of Leicestershire, S. John Biron, with a very considerable army, were upon a march to our town, which news began to startle us; instantly an alarm was given, every man from 16 to 50, and upwards, got himself into such arms as they could presently attaine, or could imagine be conduceable, for the defence of the towne.

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the day before the rebel forces entered it; and they could have remained here but a few days, as he returned on the 12th.

Likewise we had 5 field pieces and 3 troups of horse, which came to guard them from Worcester, in our town, being come the night before; those we mounted upon the church, and the rest in the best places where we could conceive we might prejudice the enemy. Our troups of horse made good a passage where they were to pass over before they could attaine to the towne. Our foote made good severall other marches and entrances, according to our utmost skill and best endeavours. The Lord Strange feeling himself thus defeated, and having been gauled twice or thrice with our pieces from the top of the church, made a stand and drew up some companies of foote under the covert of a grove of willows, who, with their muskets, played upon our troups of horse and beat them from their passage, wounding neare 20, inasmuch that they began to wade the foard,* which being descried, we, with our bowes and arrowes, sent to them, which did so gaul them, being unarmed men, (only offensive armies) that with their utmost speed they did retreat, striving to renew the shelter of the grove to hide them from us.

During this conflict, his Ex. with severall regiments of horse drewe neare the towne; which caused the Lord Strange to draw into a champayn field between our towne and him, endeavouring to intercept his passage, having got intelligence that his grosse body was about 3 hours march behind. Notwithstanding the Lord Strange his armie was very considerable both of horse and foote, yet the forces under the command of the Earle of Essex

* This probably was the ford near the "Shearing Bush," and the "champayn field" mentioned afterwards may very likely have been the flat extensive pasture-field opposite St. James's.

were so eager to fall on, that maugre all perswasions they would not stay till that the foote marcht up to second them; but having received directions from the Earle, they charged them boldly with their carbine shot, deviding so their troups, that at one onset both van and reare were charged so fiercely that, spight of all the cavalier's discretion, they lost their order, and in a confused manner retreated basely.

In this confusion many men were lost and hurt on both sides, but which side most, is not yet apparently knowne; and amongst them my Lord Paulet* was noosed, who, as it was reported, made a wise speach at the head of the armie before the skirmish, animating them on to bloody crueltie, and we doubt not but that he shall in some measure taste of the same dish he hath provided for others.

The next day a messenger was sent to Shrewsbury, to desire that Captain Winget, who was taken prisoner before Worcester, might be exchanged for one of the others; but what return wee shall have is not yet knowne.

It is conceived there was about 80 killed and 45 wounded on both sides, but which side lost most I cannot say; onely we ought to give God thanks that during the space of five hours bickering, no more blood should be shed. This is the truth of our proceedings. At my next opportunity I shall send to you. Fare well.

JOHN NORCROFT.

B. N., Oct. 5, 1642.

* Lord Paulet, though made prisoner on this occasion, regained his liberty afterwards by some means, for he is mentioned as one of those who were engaged in the siege of Lyme, in 1644.

We learn also from the following extract from a Puritan tract, entitled "*The Burning Bush not consumed*," that in the Autumn of the year 1645, that is, about half-a-year before the capture of the town and castle, a detachment from the garrison of Shrewsbury [at that time in the hands of the rebels] made an attempt on Bridgnorth, which partially succeeded :—"About the "12th. inst., (*i. e.* 12th. Sept., 1645) we "received certain intelligence by letters "from *Shrewsbury*, that the valiant and "victorious forces of that brave and most "active garrison, having intelligence in "what posture the enemy lay at *Bridge-*"*north*, they suddenly and silently marched "thither, and undiscovered fell upon the "sentinels, soone surprized them, carried "the town itself, and then fell upon the "enemy, drove them into the Castle, slew "some of them, and tooke some prisoners "that the enemy had of theirs, tooke about "180 horse, and some good pillage; all "which they safely brought away, and "returned triumphantly to *Shrewsbury* "againe." *(Part* IV, *p.* 268.*)*

It is, however, the final siege and capture of Bridgnorth that is the matter of chief interest to us, and fortunately we have a very detailed account of what then took place.* The Parliamentary Committee of Shrewsbury, after the surrender of the garrison of High Ercall, despatched a party of horse and foot against Bridgnorth. But these being delayed longer than was anticipated, on account of the length of the march, and the fatigue which they had suffered in consequence, the inhabitants received notice of their design, and had time to make some preparations against the attack. Nevertheless the day following, *i. e.* March 31, 1646, they were summoned to surrender. Colonel Billingsley, who commanded the town, made no reply to the summons, and Colonel Howard, who held the Castle, sent a peremptory answer of defiance. On this the Parliamentary forces formed themselves into three divisions, and determined to storm the town. The cavalry

* These particulars I have collected partly from the Blakeway Papers, and partly from the puritan tract of "The Burning Bush not consumed."

approached the North Gate by the Broseley Road; that part of it, lying between the present Turnpike Gate and the Innage Lane, being then a very deep and narrow defile, in some places 80 feet deep. At this point they suffered severely; for the King's troops, taking advantage of the nature of the ground, killed many of them, not only by shot, but by rolling down large stones upon them from the summit of the rock. A body of infantry, however, made their approach by a path considerably to the left of this, most probably by the fields adjoining the old Rope Walk, and from thence by Love Lane they advanced against Saint Leonard's Church Yard. Into this they easily forced an entrance, as it was only slightly fenced by palisades. There a sharp encounter ensued between them and a body of the King's troops, and before the fight was done many were left companions of the dead, on whose graves they had so fiercely fought. Among these was the gallant Colonel Billingsley, the leader of the Royalists. The sword which he used on the occasion, is now in the possession of a

descendant of the family, in the parish of Astley Abbots, by whom it is preserved with all the reverent care, which is due to so valuable an heirloom. It had often been drawn by this brave cavalier in the cause of his rightful sovereign, and it did its last service in one of the consecrated enclosures of that church, which he, as well as other noble soldiers of his time, felt it both his duty, and one of the privileges of his birthright, to defend. He lies buried in the Church Yard of Astley Abbots, his native parish; but the parish of Saint Leonard has reaped a benefit from its Church Yard having been the scene of the last gallant action which he performed; for it was partly at least on this account, that a connection of Colonel Billingsley founded and endowed the Hospital for ten poor widows, which stands on the south side of Saint Leonard's Church. The inscription over the gate bears witness to this. It is as follows:—

"Anno Domini, MDCLXXXVII.

These Almes Houses, for ten poor Widdows of this upper Town, were Built and Endowed by Francis Palmer, late Rector

of Sandy, in the County of Bedford, who had an affection to this Place, his Mother being buried in this Church, and was Sister to Colonel Francis Billingsley, late of Abbots Astley, slain in this Church Yard, in the Service of King Charles ye first."

But it is time to return to the narrative of the siege. The infantry of the Parliamentary forces having succeeded in the encounter with the King's troops in the Church Yard, immediately opened the North Gate, and gave admittance to the cavalry; and before this combined body of horse and foot, the Royalists were compelled to retreat into the Castle. On their way they were annoyed by the inhabitants of the town, who hurled stones and other missiles on them, from the stalls and piazzas which lined the High Street. It is evident that a bad feeling had sprung up between them, from what cause is not exactly known. I have seen documents which clearly prove that some Roundheads had been for a time in the town, secretly plotting against the cause of the King; and these very likely stirred up ill will between the soldiers and

the inhabitants, which, as other documents clearly prove, was aggravated by the rude license which soldiers under such circumstances often give themselves.* Whitelock states *(p. 206)* that the town had refused to bring in a month's provisions for the troops, which had been expected, and this was a wrong which no doubt deepened the feeling of resentment already existing. To this, some suppose is to be attributed the destruction of the town by fire, which the King's troops effected after getting into the Castle. This act on their part, however, may have been, one, simply of self defence; for they very probably thought, that if the enemy obtained possession of the town as it stood, it would give them great advantage in carrying on the siege of the Castle, and of this advantage they were determined to deprive them. They therefore at once set fire to the town. The first house that caught fire was one in Listley Street, which stood near the northern postern of the Castle, and from this it spread till it reached the middle

* Appendix H.

of High Street; there it was extinguished by the exertions of the Parliamentary troops. The garrison of the Castle made a second attempt on Easter Tuesday, and completely succeeded. Unhappily for the ancient Church of St. Leonard's, the rebel

Saint Leonard's Church.

army had converted it into a powder magazine—for in the rude time of war but little respect is paid to the consecrated houses of God, provided they can be turned to any advantage; and they who scrupled not to

make Worcester Cathedral a stable for their cavalry horses, would not hesitate to turn the Parish Church of St. Leonard's into an ammunition store. But it proved fatal to the building; for the Governor of the Castle, Sir Lewis Kirke, hearing of the circumstance, caused a cannon to be mounted on a round tower on the North East side of the Castle, and from thence bombarded the Church, and set fire to it. The wind being high, the flames quickly spread to the adjoining College and Almshouses, and at last consumed all that remained of the High Town.* The soldiers belonging to the army of the Parliament endeavoured to arrest the progress of the fire, but they were so galled by shots fired from the walls of the Castle, that they were obliged to give over the attempt; so that the flames spread in every direction without resistance, and soon accomplished the work of destruction. Thus was our ancient town laid in ruins: scarcely anything belonging to it was spared. Private houses and public offices—the receipt

* Appendix I.

of custom and the hall of justice—the mart of merchandise and the sanctuary of God—alike had become a prey to the devouring element; and little or nothing was left but bare walls, blackened and defaced by fire. The misery of the inhabitants is described as having been most severe. Rich and poor alike (for it was one of those visitations which levels all distinctions) were left houseless, and sought shelter where they could, in the fields around the town, in thickets, and under rocks: all their household property destroyed, and their life itself in jeopardy. Many a wretched invalid, wholly unfit to be moved, would be hurried from his bed to escape the flames—those at least who had any to care for them; while some, no doubt, in the confusion and alarm would be forgotten, and left to die a more awful death than they had looked for—their own bed becoming their funeral pile. He surely brings on himself a fearful responsibility who heedlessly evokes the spirit of war, and without an imperative necessity draws the sword to do its dreadful work.

The Parliamentary army were not deter-

red from the purpose on which they were sent, by the horrors that surrounded them (for they were dauntless men); but laid close siege to the Castle. They directed their attack against the Close, which was a place within the inner Castle adjoining the Great Tower, and containing within it the Governor's house. They chose Pam-pudding Hill as the best platform on which to erect their battery, and from thence they bombarded the Castle for three weeks; but to no purpose. No breach was effected. The garrison, from the great eminence on which they stood, quite overlooked the besieging party; and their cannonade from the tower was so effective as to overpower that of the enemy. A singular incident is related as having taken place while this cannonade was going on. "The battery on Pam-"pudding Hill played very furiously on the "besieged: the cannoneer, answering them "very smartly from the town, sent his ball "in the clear, or bore, of one of the great "guns, burst it, and killed the engineer and "many others." It is curious that an exactly similar circumstance is said to have occurred

in an early stage of the siege of Sebastopol. A Russian artilleryman, making answer to one of ours, sent a ball directly into the mouth of the English gun, and a splinter from the gun struck our poor artilleryman dead.

The leader of the Parliamentary army, seeing how fruitless the operations were which he had hitherto engaged in, devised another mode of assault. He determined to sap the Castle; and for this purpose employed a party, under Colonel Lavingstone, to make a large opening on the South side of the hill, intending to lay a Mine immediately under Saint Mary's Church, where the garrison had stored their ammunition. They commenced their excavations, and the opening which they made is still visible. It may be seen in the face of the rock which stands to the right of the New Road, before you ascend the hill, and it still bears the name of "Lavingstone's Hole." The enemy had no occasion to proceed far with this mine; for the Governor, Colonel Howard, perceiving what inevitable destruction it would cause to the

Castle and the garrison, if the mine were sprung, surrendered to the enemy, to prevent an unnecessary waste of human life.

The terms of Capitulation have been preserved.* They were honourable to the brave men, who had with such valour, and with such true fidelity to the king, maintained this post so long in his name, and adhered to his cause so firmly amidst the disheartening events which were daily taking place. The Castle on its surrender came into the possession of the Parliamentary party, who, a few months after the seizure, entirely demolished it, and gradually removed all its ruins, except that one lonely fragment of it, which stands on the south east side of the Castle Hill.

Such was the end of this famous fortress—a stronghold indeed, made so by nature, as well as by engineering skill, around whose walls the storm of war had so often and so fiercely raged—a royal castle also, over which the banner of the Kings of England had floated for more than five hundred

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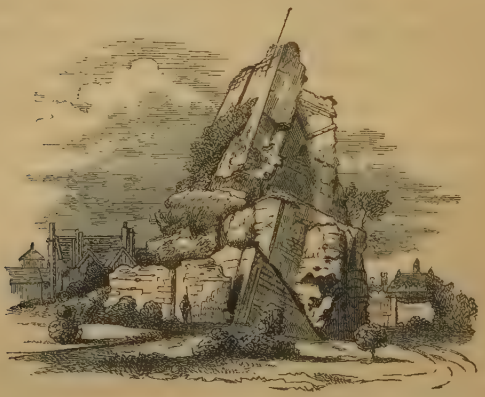
* Appendix K.

years, and which now sank into ruin cotemporaneously with the overthrow of the monarchy.



The Remains of the Castle.

It may perhaps be a matter of surprise that in the account which has been given of Bridgnorth during the civil wars, and of the town and fortress, no mention has been made of the name of "Whitmore," although Sir William Whitmore at this time was the owner of the Castle; but the fact is, that he had business enough on his hands in endeavouring to defend his own residence at Apley from the attacks of the insurgents,

so that he had no time to devote to other interests. He maintained possession of Apley till the spring of 1644, when it was taken by a party of Roundheads, under the command of Sir John Price,* and Sir William himself made prisoner. An attempt was made to recover it in the month of June, of the following year, by some of the King's forces from Worcester, Lichfield, and other garrisons; but they were encountered by a detachment of the opposite party from Shrewsbury, and four hundred of them taken prisoners; and Sir William Crofts, of Hereford, was among the slain. *(History of Shrewsbury, Vol. 1, p. 460, note 2.)*

The property of Sir William Whitmore, like that of other Royalists, was forfeited, and became the spoil of the Parliamentary party: all his personal goods and chattels were sequestrated, and sold for the benefit of the State, for the sum of £583 3s. 2d. His estates were siezed, and he was afterwards

* "A party of Sir William Brereton's, under Sir John Price, a Member of Parliament, took Apseley House in Shropshire, and in it Sir William Whitmore, Sir Francis Oatley, Mr. Owen, and other Commissioners of Array there sitting, and about 60 common soldiers." *Whitelock's Memorials, p.* 134.

allowed to compound for them by paying the sum of £5,000.* This was the common lot of such, as in those troubled times stood for the defence of their King, and were loyal to the last. Their personal property was put into the hands of Parliamentary sequestrators, and sold as forfeit to the State; and their landed estates were bought back by their rightful owners at a considerable sacrifice. A register was kept, and afterwards published, of the names of those who thus suffered in the cause of loyalty, with the sum, for which they compounded, affixed to each. It is entitled, "A Catalogue of the Lords, Knights, and Gentlemen, that have compounded for their Estates. *London, printed* 1655." † In it are to be found the familiar Shropshire names of Whitmore, Wolwryche, Acton, Corbett, Ottley, Billings-

* Appendix L.

† A copy of this very scarce and curious book is in the possession of Mr. S. Sydney Smith, who very kindly permitted me to make the above extract from it. Perhaps I may be allowed to express the satisfaction which I felt, on finding in this list of loyal sufferers the names of two of my own kindred, belonging to a branch of our family who had early settled in the county of Chester. "Bellett, John, Senior, and John his son, of Morton, Com. Chest., Esq., 1005 . 05 : 00."

ley, Littleton, Eyton, Newport, Weld, Pigot, &c.; and certainly it detracts nothing from the honour which belongs to these ancient families, that their names are inscribed in this "black legend," as it was very fitly termed. On the blank leaf of the copy which I have seen is the following entry in manuscript:—

"Total Fines	£1,275,667
Value of Annuities, at 10 years	90,000
Amount of Money at the period of exaction	1,365,667
Equal in money of the present period, 1842, to four times the amount	£5,462,668

But under the government of Cromwell, not only laymen who drew the sword in defence of the crown, but clergymen who maintained and taught the principles of loyalty, and who were too honest to abandon them when they became unpopular, were deprived of their revenues. It is computed that the number of ministers in the Church, who were ejected from their livings on this account, were above 9000; and the sufferings

which many of them underwent, in consequence, form materials for the most deeply affecting narratives.* I am sorry to say that the minister of Saint Leonard's was not found among those who were faithful to their principles. While Shiffnal, and Wellington, and Chetton, and Sidbury, and Kemberton, and Cleobury, and Highley, and others could boast of pastors, who willingly endured persecution for conscience sake, *Gilbert Walden*, Minister of Saint Leonard's, Bridgnorth, was found unfaithful in the day of trial, and seems to have sacrificed his principles to his interest. His name is found in the Parish Register as minister, within a year of the date of the siege, when the town was in the hands of the Royalists; then it disappears from it, when it was evident that the fortunes of that party were declining; and then appears again, when the town was in possession of the Parliamentary party. So that it is to be feared that he professed allegiance to the King and Church when he thought their cause

* Appendix M.

likely to prosper, but when it declined he attached himself to the Roundheads.

Indeed this is scarcely a mere matter of inference, as the reader may judge for himself from an entry, still remaining in the books of the Corporation. It is as follows :—"Bridgnorth. A° D^ni. 1644. "At the Court Leete held in the said Town "of Bridgnorth, the VII^th. day of May. A° "Caroli Aug^t XX° Richard Synge and "Will^m. Bradley, gent, being Bayliffs. At "this Leete it was moted by the Bayliffs "and others, That forsomuch as Mr. Gilbert "Walden, the late publiq Preacher of the "said Town, is recesste and gon out of the "said Town, and hath deserted his place "ever sithence aboute a moneth before "Easter last. That one Mr. Thomas Laugh-"ton, Master of Artes, a Preacher (who is "recommended to the place by S^r Lewis "Kirke, Knight, Governo^r of the said "Towne, and whoe hath supplyed the place "since Mr. Walden's goeing away) shold "be accepted by the Town in the said Mr. "Walden's place, to be publiq Preacher of "the said Town, w^th the profitte and al-

"lowance thereunto belonginge; unto wh. "all that were here present at this Leete "agree, and nominate him, the said Mr. "Laughton, publiq Preacher of the said "Town, with all such proffits and allow- "ance as the said Mr. Walden had of the "Town's allowance in that behalfe, Soe as "he preach two Sundayes at the High "Church, and the third at the Low Church, "as Mr. Walden did. And this to be further "confirmed at a Common Hall, yf it be "desired." The Parliament were not unmindful of Gilbert Walden, but in reward for his desertion of the Royalists, placed him again in his office as Minister of Saint Leonard's, and restored to him all its emoluments. But far happier were they who stood firm in the evil day, and had the Christian courage to brave the consequences —and with such sainted men as Hall, and Usher, and Hammond, and Jeremy Taylor, submitted to the penalties of sequestration, poverty, imprisonment, and exile, rather than desert what they believed the cause of God and of His Truth.

But it must not be supposed, from any-

thing that I have said on this subject, that I regard as evil-minded, and unprincipled men, all the Ministers of religion, who in those difficult and trying times sided with Cromwell and the Parliamentary party. This would not only be a most uncharitable opinion, but one formed in direct opposition to the plainest historical evidence. There were men of deep piety and extensive learning, who unhappily lent their countenance to the usurpation of Cromwell—men who afterwards suffered persecution themselves for conscience sake, and whose Christian worth was such, that we may safely say of them, what Dr. Johnson says of Watts—that they were to be imitated in everything except in their nonconformity. Nothing indeed can be said in justification of the line of conduct which they pursued, but they were prompted to it by pure and not by corrupt motives, and so far they are to be respected. Among the great and good men who were allied to the Parliamentary party, I should especially name one, on account of his connection with Bridgnorth, namely, *Richard Baxter*. It appears that he

began his ministry in this town, in the Church of St. Leonard's; but left it after some time, with, I am sorry to say, a very unfavourable impression as to the character of our townsmen of that day. It is said that on leaving them he shook off the dust of his feet against them, and declared that their hearts were harder than the rock on which their town was built. But his disappointment at the want of success in his ministry here did not estrange his mind from the inhabitants of a place, where he had commenced his course; but he felt, after years of absence, the strongest desires for their welfare. A very pleasing proof we have of this, in an old edition of his work, entitled "The Saint's Rest" (A. D. 1654); for there we find the following dedication to the people of Bridgnorth :—

TO MY DEARLY BELOVED FRIENDS
THE INHABITANTS OF
BRIDGNORTH,
BOTH MAGISTRATES AND PEOPLE,
RICHARD BAXTER
DEVOTETH THIS PART OF THIS TREATISE,
IN TESTIMONY OF HIS UNFEIGNED LOVE TO
THEM, WHO WERE THE FIRST TO WHOM HE

WAS SENT (AS FIXED) TO PUBLISH THE GOSPEL; AND IN THANKFULNESS TO THE DIVINE MAJESTY, WHO THERE PRIVILEGED AND PROTECTED HIM.

It has been already stated that the fire, which took place during the siege of the Castle, entirely destroyed the High Town, and left it a heap of ruins. A few houses indeed survived the general destruction.* One of these, which is still standing, deserves a passing notice, as being the birth-place of Dr. Percy, Bishop of Dromore, the well known author of "The Reliques of Ancient English Poetry." † It stands at the bottom of the Cartway, adjoining Un-

* One could wish, as a mere matter of curiosity, that a remarkable building, called "Forester's Folly," had been amongst those which escaped the fire; for it was built by Richard Forester, the private secretary of no less famous a person than Bishop Bonner, and bore the above appellation most likely on account of the cost of its erection. William Baxter, the Antiquary, who was a descendant of Forester, has the following passage in his life referring to the circumstance:—

"Proavus meus Richardus de isto matrimonio susceptus uxorem habuit Annam Richardi dicti Forestarii filiam: qui quidem Richardus filius erat natu minor prænobilis familiæ Forestariorum. (olim Regiorum Vigorniensis saltûs custodum) & famoso Episcopo Bonnero a-Secretis Hic Suttanum Madoci incolebat, & egregias ædes posuit in urbicula dicta Brugge, sive ad Pontem vel hodie dictas Forestarii Dementiam."—*Autoris Vita.*

† Appendix N.

derhill Street, and is conspicuous among the dwellings which surround it, not only from its size, but from its picturesque appearance, being ornamented with several pointed gables, and being constructed partly of solid beams of oak, in some places curiously carved, and partly of masonry. It was built in the latter end of the sixteenth century, as the following embossed inscription in the entrance hall informs us:—

"EXCEPT THE LORD BViLD THE OWSE, THE LABOURERS THEREOF EVAIL NOTHING. ERECTED BY R. FOR* [Qy Foster] 1580."

It was a large and stately mansion, and when the Cartway was the principal entrance to the town it was well situated, and must have been regarded as a dwelling of some importance. It is now in a neglected condition, a large part of the building is untenanted, a part of the premises is used for an iron foundry, and another part for a huckster's shop. But even in its present rude and decayed condition, a certain degree of interest attaches to it, as being one of the few surviving relics of our old town; which interest is further enhanced, from its

having been, about an hundred years ago, the birth place of one, whose literary attainments may be supposed to reflect no little honor on Bridgnorth.

It remains for us to consider how the town recovered from the state of almost total ruin in which it had been left, and

was made habitable again. It appears that in the same year in which it was destroyed, the Bailiffs and others forwarded a Petition to the House of Commons, setting forth in strong terms the miserable condition to which the inhabitants had been reduced, and praying for relief. They state that the loss sustained by them amounted to £90,000, or thereabouts; that upwards of three hundred poor families had been "inforced" by the loss of their goods, their trade, and habitations, "to disperse into severall parts of the country, for harbour and for subsistence, many among them crying aloud for bread": and they humbly beseech the Parliament to authorize a general collection to be made for them throughout the country, or in some other way, to afford relief to their necessities. The Rev. Gilbert Walden, who has been referred to before, took this petition to London, and by his zeal and diligence obtained a favorable answer to it; as appears from the following extract in the Common Hall Order Book:—

"Bridgnorth. At a Comon hall of the said "Town of Bridgnorth, the 27th. of January,

"Aº Dni. 1647. Francis Burne and Richard
"Synge, Gent., being Bailiffs, &c. * * * *
"At this Comon hall, Mr. Gilbert Walden,
"Minister of this Town, and Publiq
"Preacher, returning to the Town from Lon-
"don, 25th. of this January Instant, came
"into this comon hall in his own pson, &
"acquainted the Town with his great care
"& paynes in solliciting the Parliament
"with a peticion from the Town, for some
"repaire of their great loss by the late
"burning of the High Town of Bridgnorth,
"when the Church, Colledg, and Alms-
"houses were burnt with the said Town.
"All the losses thereby sustynedd amounting
"to 90,000£, as by the said Peticion was set
"forth and certified: and the said Mr. Wal-
"den pducing lres pattents, under the great
"seale of England, for a general collecion
"thorough out all England, for rebuilding
"of the said Town, and repayringe the said
"losses, and moving for some course to be
"taken for distributing the Briefs, and
"setting them on work in all shires of
"England and Wales, with all ye conve-
"nient expidicion that might be, and

"advising a way to that behalf; and shew-
"ing the Town withall that it had cost
"him in the acquiring & getting of
"these Lres pattentes and Briefs, besides
"the great troubling of his friends to ayde
"& assist him therein."

But these letters patent, under the Great Seal, granted by the Parliament, seem to have yielded but little fruit to the impoverished inhabitants of Bridgnorth; and the collections made under its sanction were so inadequate to their wants, that they were obliged to resort to other means for obtaining relief. They addressed a circular letter, (to some merchants in London, as I conclude from the contents of it) complaining bitterly of the very little sympathy which had been shewn to them throughout the country, and of the very scant measure of assistance which they had received, and very earnestly soliciting their aid. It also appears that another circular was drawn up, to be sent for the same purpose to persons whom they supposed to be well affected to Bridgnorth, in the counties of Derby, Worcester, and Gloucester. The first is as follows:—

" Gentlemen,

In the behalfe of our poore Towne, whereof wee are now the representative Body, wee heartiely thanke you for that you have ben pleased to put your helping hands to raise us up againe out of the Ashes. Our greatest hopes is in the charity of yourselves and your friends in the citie. Wee have had sad experience of the countries chariety, yet what the further result wil be wee daylie must expect; howsoever, wee shall acknowledge our engagements unto you above all other, be it less or more. Wee beseach you continew your care and paynes for us: and your reward shall be implored from God by us, and ourselves, both for our minister and our whole Towne, shall acknowledge your goodness with hartie thankes and praiere, and wee be unto you

Your ready servants,
& friends to cerve you.

Bridgnorth, 10 may,
1647."

The state of destitution, in which the inhabitants of this ruined town were placed, was such, that it is no wonder that they looked in every direction for relief, from whence they thought it at all likely to come, and that they were thus urgent in their appeal for it. In one case they were not disappointed, as appears from the following letter, addressed, about the same date I suppose, to Mr. Pully, of Essex: a name well known, and gratefully remembered by

the people of Bridgnorth, for other benefits besides those referred to here.*

"To Mr. Pully, of Essex.

Wee have cause to blesse God that our miserable towne affords a native friend so far to besteed us as by yourself. Wee will studdy some requitall, as God shall please, to raise us out of our ashes.

Wee entreat you to go on in helping us, as Mr. Bushopp hath told us you have begun. The Lord reward you, wee and all ours shall pray for you; and if ever wee shall be happy to see you, wee shall give some further testimony of our thankfullness.

Who speake in the behalf of ourselves, our minister, and whole towne."

The want of a Town Hall seems to have been much felt by the Burgesses of Bridgnorth—the former one, which stood outside the North Gate, having been pulled down during the Civil Wars; but the erection of a new one, with new materials, was more than

* This Mr. Pulley, of Hassington, in the county of Essex, gave to will "to his Wife Wynnefred for her natural life, all this his house and land, lying in Beauchamp Roothing, in the county of Essex, and after her dicease, to the inhabitants of the Towne of Bridgnorth, in the county of Salop, for ever; conditionally, that they should every year and yearly, for ever, give £16 of the rent of the said land unto two young men or women, of the said Towne, who should stand in need of it, whose Tordlinesse might make it likely to do them good, viz, £8 apiece."

they could possibly accomplish, in the impoverished state in which they had been left. They therefore applied to Lady Bartue of Wenlock, and petitioned that she would grant them the materials of an old barn which were about to be sold, for the sum of £40 or £50; by means of which they might be able to rebuild the Hall.* The petition was granted; but whether the old materials were bestowed as a free gift, or sold for the sum specified, does not appear. The building was in consequence erected; and partly, at least, through the earnest advice of Mr. Gilbert Walden, in a letter addressed by him to the Bailiffs, was placed, not in the situation of the former Hall, but in the middle of the High Street. It was not completed, however, till four years after the date of his letter (April 24th., 1648); as appears from the following entry in the Common Hall Order Book:—

"The New Hall set up in the Market "Place of the High Street of Bridgnorth "was begun, and the stone arches thereof

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* Appendix O.

"made, when Mr. Francis Preen and Mr. "Symon Beauchamp were Bayliffs in sum- "mer, 1650. And the Timber work, and "building upon the same stone arches, was "set up when Mr. Thomas Burne and Mr. "Roger Taylor were Bayliffs of the said "Town of Bridgnorth, in July and August, "1652."

The Town Hall.

But notwithstanding these applications for assistance from various quarters, and the earnest efforts made by the inhabitants

themselves, the town appears to have continued during the period of the Commonwealth, almost in the same state of ruin in which it was left after the siege—the Church, College, and Almshouses,* still roofless and dilapidated—and nothing effectual was done for their restoration, and the rebuilding of the town, till the reign of Charles II. Shortly after he was restored to the throne, a very earnest Petition was forwarded to him from the Bailiffs and Burgesses of the Borough, and other inhabitants of the town, praying for relief; and this Petition was accompanied by a certificate, under the hands and seals of Sir William Whitmore, Sir Thomas Wolrich, Sir Walter Acton, Sir John Weld, Sir Richard Ottley, and others, attesting the damage which had been done to the town, and the amount of the loss of property sustained by the inhabitants in consequence. This petition, backed by this certificate, drew from the King a proclamation,† addressed to all his subjects in behalf of Bridgnorth. It

* Appendix P. † Appendix Q.

is very long and elaborate—very carefully worded—and not only sets forth very fully the wants of the petitioners, but pleads their cause with a warmth and earnestness which one would not expect to find in an official document. It authorizes a general collection to be made throughout the kingdom; "in all and every the Cities, Towns Corporate, Priviledged Places, Parishes, Hamlets, Villages, and all other places whatsoever," in order to assist the destitute people of Bridgnorth in rebuilding their shattered town; and it directs both Ministers and Churchwardens to do what in them lies to further this object in their different localities. It would be interesting to know the exact amount which this royal proclamation, and another which followed it in about ten years, produced. There is no doubt that it was something considerable—sufficient to give an impulse to the industry of the inhabitants—to enable them to restore their ruined Church, College, and Almshouses—to efface in a great measure the damages of war, and to make Bridgnorth again a habitable town.

Thus, from the happy restoration of the

monarchy in England, and the re-establishment of its church, we may date the restoration of our town from the state of ruin, in which it had been left; and its restoration being coeval with these important and felicitous events, many would be disposed to regard as no bad omen of its welfare. The motto in the arms of a neighbouring city may well express our wish for its future prosperity; for though the terms are hardly suitable to a town of so small a circumference as ours, yet it merits well the character it has maintained, in almost every era of its history—*Floreat semper fidelis civitas.*

My subject was "The Antiquities of Bridgnorth." I have already far passed the boundaries which confined me to such a subject, by referring to matters which occurred so late as the reign of Charles II. I would, however, venture one step farther, and refer to an event which took place in the reign of his successor, James II, for I find that it was taken particular notice of in Bridgnorth at the time of its occurrence;

and it is one which, from the great interest and importance that attaches to it, seems to claim attention from us whenever it happens to be brought before us.

The event referred to occurred in the memorable year of 1688. In the "Blakeway Papers," in the Bodleian Library, which contain matters concerning Bridgnorth, the following entry is made respecting it:—"When the Bishops were quit, "there were 16 bonefires in this town, and "the ringing of bells night and day. Mr. "Cornes and Mr. Bailey, the two Ministers, "refused to sign the Declaration." This notice alludes to the well-known Declaration issued by King James, and the acquittal of the seven Bishops who had been imprisoned for venturing to oppose it. James the Second was as zealous a member of the Church of Rome, perhaps, as any of his subjects, lay or ecclesiastical; and the great object of his life seemed to be, to regain for his Church the same usurped authority over the civil and religious liberties of our country, which she possessed before the Reformation. Among other means for fur-

thering this object, he published this famous "Declaration." It was a very singular document. On the plea of establishing liberty of conscience, it abrogated, on the King's sole authority, all the penal laws which were in force on the subject of religion, the King thus assuming to himself, as one of his royal prerogatives, the power of dispensing with existing statutes, without the consent of Parliament. The real intention of the King in all this was, to open the door to Roman Catholics to places of power and authority, which the laws then in force strictly forbade, as being incompatible with the freedom and safety of the state. To give publicity, as well as sanction, to this Declaration, the King issued a command that it should be read by the Clergy during Divine Service, in every church in the kingdom. The whole proceeding was perfectly arbitrary and despotic; and if it had been allowed to go on unchecked, it would, as it has been well observed, have given a death blow to the Constitution, and have laid the nation's liberties at the feet of the sovereign. Where then were the champions

of freedom in this great crisis of danger? Where were to be found the men, who had courage enough to resist this portentous encroachment on the liberties of England? Where the assertors of the nation's rights against these unlawful inroads of the royal prerogative? Not in a band of youthful and ardent enthusiasts in the cause of freedom—not in a knot of ruthless republicans, whose tempers were impatient of monarchial rule, and who hated the very name of King—not in a set of restless innovators, who loved innovation for the excitement it produced, or for the spoil which it might yield to them—not in a rude soldiery, who were ambitious of enterprise, and longed to signalize themselves again by deeds of daring—but in the persons of seven aged Bishops of the Church, some of whom were not only oppressed by the burden of age, but weighed down by sickness and infirmity; and all of them, both from temper and principle, averse to anything that seemed like resistance to kingly authority. Yet it was these who stood forward at this time of danger, as the

defenders of the nation's liberties. Their names were well known to our townsmen at the time, for Bridgnorth, as well as other places, rang with unusual joy at the news of their acquittal; and it is well that their names should be known to our townspeople now, as the names of men who have laid the nation under a deep debt of gratitude. They were Sancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury; Lloyd, Bishop of St. Asaph; White, Bishop of Peterborough; Turner, Bishop of Ely; Lake, Bishop of Chichester; Trelawney, Bishop of Bristol; and Ken, the pious Bishop of Bath and Wells,* a saint indeed, formed on the primitive model, whose devout aspirations in his Morning and Evening Hymn have served to kindle the devotion of the members of the English Church for nearly two centuries. These seven Prelates met together at Lambeth in this critical juncture, and drew up a petition to James, in which they set forth in plain but respectful language the illegality of his Declaration, and humbly

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* Appendix R.

prayed him not to insist on their publishing it. In consequence of this they were committed to the Tower. The King, notwithstanding their dutiful remonstrance, was resolved on enforcing on the clergy throughout the kingdom the publication of this unlawful document, and sent his commands to that effect: but of the many thousands to whom this mandate was sent, not two hundred complied with it; and among those who had the courage to refuse, we are glad to find the names of the two Ministers of Bridgnorth, Mr. Cornes, and Mr. Bailey.

The Bishops after a short term of imprisonment were admitted to bail, and at the ensuing Sessions were impeached at Westminster Hall on a charge of publishing a seditious libel. Every circumstance which took place on this memorable occasion is full of interest, and historians have thought the most minute details not unworthy of record. On their way to the scene of trial, the Bishops, it is mentioned, received every possible expression of reverence and sympathy from

the populace, who formed a lane for their passage, through which as they moved, many kissed their hands and their garments, and many fell on their knees and earnestly asked their blessing. Westminster Hall never witnessed such a scene as their trial presented. As it proceeded, the interest felt by the spectators was intense; and when at length the verdict was given by the foreman of the Jury, "Not Guilty," the profound silence which had reigned throughout the court was broken by the most tumultuous acclamations. The multitudes assembled there raised, in spite of the menace of the Solicitor General, such a shout as shook the old fabric of Westminster Hall, and conveyed, quicker than the speediest messenger could do, the tidings to the city. The Bishops on leaving the court immediately repaired to Whitehall Chapel, to return thanks to God for their deliverance, and other churches were thronged by multitudes who assembled in them for the same purpose. "The bells rung from every tower, every house was illuminated, and bonfires were kindled in

every street." The joy was not confined to London, it was propagated throughout the kingdom, and felt in the remotest villages. Bridgnorth, as we have seen, fully shared in it. Our streets on the occasion echoed with loud shouts of triumph—the river Severn reflected on its stream the blaze of many a bonfire—and the tuneful bells of St. Leonard's and St. Mary's rang incessantly night and day to celebrate the event.

I have thus brought before the reader the few historical notices which I have been able to collect, respecting Bridgnorth, from the time of Alfred the Great to the close of the reign of James II. I am aware how much more interest would attach to these if they had been skilfully handled, inasmuch as they touch on some very important events, and memorable epochs of our national history. Those indeed who feel the force of local attachment may read them with interest, whatever defects may be apparent in the mode of bringing them together, and it is for such readers that they

have been collected. I am aware also, that I have dwelt much longer on certain facts in our history than many would think at all necessary, or than was exactly pertinent to my subject. My reason is, that some would read these things here, who would not be likely to read them elsewhere; and I thought it advisable, on account of their importance, that they should be known in detail. Besides, I was anxious to make this little work more useful in its character, than it would have been if I had confined myself to a statement of the facts relating to our town, without connecting them with the general history of England. As it is, the review which we have taken, ought not to be without its moral influence. Many generations of men have thus passed rapidly before us: having acted their parts in quick succession, they have disappeared from the stage of life. They had "their exits and their entrances," and now are seen no more. It is natural for us to reflect, how utterly unimportant to them it now is in what capacity they appeared—whether as kings or subjects—whether as masters or as slaves

—whether they were honoured or dishonoured—illustrious or obscure—prosperous or unfortunate. It matters not to them now, whether their projects succeeded or failed—whether the enterprises they so keenly entered on issued in triumph or disaster. Their restless activities have been put a stop to. The hand of death has arrested them. The same destiny awaits ourselves. We too shall soon make our exit; and the interests which now so deeply engage us—the circumstances which now press on us in all their vivid reality —the scenes which are now before our eyes, and the busy part we take in them—will ere long be reckoned among the things that have been; and nothing will be left us, but the character which we have acquired in passing through them—our fitness or unfitness for a better state: and this reflection I desire to leave on the mind of the reader.

It would seem, however, scarcely natural for me to close these pages, without expressing a wish for the future welfare of a place, the scattered notices of whose past history

I have here collected. I have been too long, and too intimately connected with it, not to feel the wish. In Bridgnorth I have passed more than twenty years. I reckon them the happiest of my life. I have good reason for doing so. Many domestic blessings—many social pleasures—many natural enjoyments—have here been allotted to me. Here "the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places," and in the fair scenes of nature which surround us, there has been open to me a source of "unreproved pleasures," of which it is my own fault if I have not largely partaken. Here too I have formed acquaintances, which have ripened into friendships—friendships which have yielded me something more than mere enjoyment—and which I have reason to hope will last as long as life itself. But still closer ties bind me to this place. Here I have been entrusted with the care of souls, and have been called to minister in the Church of God. This consideration necessarily outweighs every other, and prompts me with the most earnest wishes for the welfare of a place, between many of the inhabitants of which

and myself there is so strict and sacred a fellowship. And not from these alone, but from those also with whom I am not thus officially connected—from the inhabitants of St. Mary's parish, as well as from those of St. Leonard's, I have received such proofs of kindness and regard during my ministry here, as make me feel an interest in everything that can concern their well-being. May they prosper in every way—as a community, and as individuals—in their civil and commercial interests—in their social, moral, and religious condition. May they secure to themselves that which has "the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come:" that when things temporal shall give place to things eternal—when the changes and chances of this mortal life shall cease—and all the vicissitudes which so painfully diversify the history of this world have passed away—they may have their lot and part in that kingdom which cannot be moved, and "of whose government and peace there shall be no end."

Finis.

WEST

A COPY

of an OLD MAP of the

BOROUGH of BRIDGENORTH

IN POSSESSION OF THE CORPORATION.

Oldbury
the Condit heade
the Condit Fielde
the Righe Fielde
Old Castell hill
Mary Magd
Brugg Northe
the Friers
the great Pillet
St Johns Weare
the Weares Pillet
Cave crofftes
Home Closes
West Crofte
Mill Streete
Tippings Croft
Sythe Streete
St James
St Johns
Bacons crofftes
the olde Dyche under the gybet
Morfe Forest
St Nicholas Acke
the Armitage

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

A.

(Page 7.)

MORF FOREST.

There are so many references to the Forest of Morf in the early history of Bridgnorth, that it may be well, for the information of the reader, to append the following interesting description of it, given by Mr. Eyton, in the 3rd. Vol. of his *Antiquities*, p. 212.

"Where now the Counties of Shropshire, Staffordshire, and Worcestershire converge, there was once a vast region of Forest, not confined to one bank of a succession of lakes and marshes which we now know as the Valley of the Severn, but stretching away for miles eastward and westward. The Severn itself was in one place a land-locked and sluggish stream; in another a series of rivulets struggling on, with no concentrated force, amid the various impediments which uncontrolled nature had crowded on its course. Its fits of wintry and swollen fury, like human passions, re-acted upon themselves; for the giant oak, which to-day was

torn from its bank and plunged in the torrent, lay on the morrow athwart the subsiding stream, an additional element of its future bondage.

"The region, whose chief features I thus imagine, seems to have been known to the Britons as *Coed*, or forest—the forest, that is, *par excellence* of this part of England.

"When we read of the Forests of Morf, Kinver, and Wyre, we get notions of extent which must be added one to the other before we can realize any idea of the more ancient *Coed*; for the *Coed* was the parent of the other three, and they perhaps not its only constituents.

"I am now to speak of Morf Forest more particularly, and, though I cannot indicate the precise time at which it was separated from its associates, we shall not err in ascribing the change to an increasing population, and the Saxon devotion to agriculture.

"In the earliest stage of its self-existence, Morf Forest can be ascertained to have been at least eight miles in length, while its greatest width was more problematically about six. Its known, because afterwards maintained, northern boundary rested upon the Worf, for some miles before that stream falls into the Severn. Its south-eastern extremity is determined by its name, taken from the Staffordshire Village of Morf, where commenced that interval which gradual change had interposed between the Forests of Morf and Kinver.

"By still further compression of its southern boundaries, and by large clearances within its area, Morf Forest had, at the Norman Conquest, been altered both in extent and character. But the Forest ground, though alternated with cornfields and villages, was still very great, and very great it

remained for more than two centuries afterwards."

* * * * * *

The final perambulation of this Forest was made in the reign of Edward I, A.D., 1300; and it will be a matter of interest to those who know the locality, to trace its ancient boundaries, as given in the document, which was published after the survey was made. It is furnished by Mr. Eyton in p. 219, and is as follows:—

"From Pendlestones Mulne (Pendleston Mill), going up by the Severn to where Worgh (Worf) falls into Severn*: and so going up along the bank of Worgh to Worth-brugg (Worf-bridge), and going up thence along the said bank to Rindeleford-brugg (Rindleford-bridge): and so going up along the bank to Chirle, and upwards still to Chirlefordes-brugg; and so along the highway to the *vill* of Hulton (Hilton), and thence by a certain road to Woghbrokesheth, and so straight along the Stoni-strete† to Apewardes Castle,§ and so along the boundary between the Counties of Salop and Stafford to the Chirlesok: and thence direct between the King's *demesne* in his Manor of Claverley, and the fields of Whittimere, Borhton (Broughton), Bebrugg (Beobridge), and Gatacre, to the Cover of Morf. And so through the said Cover to the Blackewalle at the Oldefield, and thence to the Shirevelydyat: and thence by the Crosweyslone (Crossways-lane) to the hedge of the Brodenewelonde: and thence straight to Fililode, and so between the hedge and the Lythe to

* "The original and natural confluence of the Worf with the Severn was much higher than at Pendleston Mill."

† "The Roman Road before alluded to."

§ "Now Abbot's Castle Hill."

Trugge-put. And so going down by a certain water-course to the Stonibrugge of Wodeton (Stone-bridge of Wooton), and so along a water-course to Wynelesford; and thence by the highway to Mose-lydyat, and thence to Halyweyes-lydyat; and so by a certain path to the Hethenedich, going down by the Hethenedich to the weir (gurgitem) of Quatford: and so going up by the Severn to a certain ancient ditch, between the field of Brugge and the *vill* of Quatford: and along the highway to the House of the Lepers of St. James of Brugge: and thence right to a certain ancient ditch under the Gyhet (Gibbet-Hill); and so straight to Baconescroft, going down to Tissengecros; and so by the highway going up to Pendestanes Mulne, where the first boundary of the said *bosc* begins. The Perambulators also declare that John de Hastinges holds Rughtone (Roughton), Barndelegh (Bradney), Hocoumbe, Swanecot, Burcote, and Bromlegh; John de Astlegh holds the Manor of Northlegh (Nordley); John Fitz Philip holds the *vill* of Mose; and the Dean of Brugge holds the *vill* of Quatford,—all within the bounds of the said Forest." *

B.

(Page 22.)

BRIDGNORTH CASTLE.

The sole remaining fragment of this Castle was very carefully examined and measured by King, the author of "*Munimenta Antiqua*"; in which work he gives the following description of it. (pp. 346-7) He was of opinion indeed that it was a

* "Salop Chartulary. No. 279."

Saxon fortress; but in this he must have been mistaken, as the testimony of history is very clear as to the fact, that it was erected by the Norman Earl, Robert de Belesme.

"The exceeding solidity of whose structure [the leaning Tower] has defied the decay of ages, the blast of gunpowder, and the continually active force of gravity, notwithstanding it is apparently in a tottering state.....It evidently contained three apartments, one above another, each of which were of small dimensions, being only 23 feet 10 inches in length, and 21 feet 2 inches in breadth, and the entrance was manifestly by an arched doorway up a flight of steps on the outside, The marks of the places for the timbers supporting every floor are still visible.....The walls are between 8 and 9 feet thick, or rather more, but not quite uniformly so on each side; for the external measure of the Tower is nearly about 41½ feet square. The outside wall next the town has not even a loophole in it. This side however is very oddly covered with iron hooks, which are said by tradition to have been placed there so late as in the time of Charles I., during the civil wars, to hang wool packs upon, in order to protect the walls from the effects of the cannon: but as this tale is not credible, and the hooks themselves have the appearance of being much more ancient, they serve rather to remind one of a savage custom which sometimes prevailed in early ages, of fastening the bodies of enemies slain on the outside of the walls of fortresses."

C.

(Page 42.)

WOODEN FORTIFICATIONS OF THE TOWN.

A further grant was made for the same purpose

by Henry III. "On May 10, 1220, King Henry III, being at Worcester, orders the Sheriff of Salop to aid the Burgesses of Bruges in the enclosure of their town, allowing them out of the Royal Forest near Bruges, as much of old stumps and dead timber as would suffice to make two stacks(rogos). This was to be done with as little injury as possible to the Forest." *(Antiquities of Shropshire, Vol. 1, p. 299.)* Notwithstanding this caution, however, a good deal of damage was done, on account of the large amount of timber which was required for this purpose; for in the Sheriff's report of the state of the Forest in 1235 there is the following notice:—"Item. The *Bosc* of Worfield was viewed—much wasted by ancient waste, to wit, in the time of the great war [the Barons' war], and also in the time of R., late Earl of Chester, who, whilst he was sheriff, sold 1700 oak trees there, besides other wastes made in his time for the Castle of Bruges, and besides delivery of timber made for enclosing the *Vill* of Bruges, before it was fortified with a wall." *(Ibid, Vol. 3, p. 215.)*

D.

(Page 44.)

THE CHARTER OF THE BOROUGH.

The earliest written Charter was granted to the Borough in the reign of Henry II., A.D., 1157, and is as follows:—

"Henry, King of England, and Duke of Normandy, and Aquitaine, and Earl of Anjou, to his Justiciars, and Sheriffs, and Barons, and Ministers, and all his faithful of England, greeting. Know ye that I have conceded to my Burgesses of Bruge

all their franchises, and customs, and rights, which they, or their ancestors, had in the time of King Henry, my grandfather. Wherefore I will and strictly command that they have them well, and in peace, and honourably, and fully; within the Borough and without, in wood and in field, in meadows and pastures, and in all things, with such comparative fulness and honour, as they held them in the time of King Henry, my grandfather. And I forbid any one to do them injury or insult in regard of their tenements. Witnesses—T. Chancellor, and Henry de Essex Constable, and William Fitz Alan, at Raddemore."

In the reign of King John a second Charter was granted, January 10, 1215. A few years afterwards this was renewed by King Henry III, who, in a short time, considerably enlarged the privileges of the Burgesses, in the new Charter referred to. It has been generally supposed, that this charter was destroyed along with other documents, in the fire which took place in Bridgnorth during the siege of the Castle. Most of the papers, belonging to the Corporation, were placed in St. Leonard's Church for safety; but, this having been set fire to, they were all burnt, and this charter, as it was supposed, among them. But I conclude from the following passage in the Blakeway Papers that this is a mistake, and that this original charter, granted by King Henry, may still be in existence. "In M.S. Congreve are the following historical particulars of the town, in the reign of James II.:—' The following Aldermen subscribed to the running away with the Charter.

"John Lewis and William Hammonds, Bailiffs; Humphrey Braine, George Longnor, William Baker, Thomas Weal, and about forty others.

"Bickerton's son subscribed for him while he was out of town.

"Silvanus read a recantation afterwards. Bailiff Hammonds took away the Charter which the town had possessed for 450 years (the people of the town pursuing him) contrary to the mind of the old sages of the town.'"

E.

(Page 123.*)*

SUPPRESSION OF THE RELIGIOUS HOUSES.

Whatever may have been Queen Mary's private feelings, it is plain that she yielded to the pressure of political expediency in this matter. In order to induce the Parliament to repeal all the statutes made against the See of Rome in the two last reigns, she ratified in the fullest manner the alienation of the property which had belonged to Abbeys, Priories, Chantries, Colleges, &c., and strictly forbade any suits against any one on that score, either by authority from the Pope, or general council, or on pretence of any canon or ecclesiastical constitution whatever. *(Collier's Ecclesiastical History, Vol.* VI, *Book* V, *pp.* 94-6.*)*

But there are some facts connected with the subject of the suppression of the Monasteries, and the confiscation of their property, which ought to be better known, in order to shew how little warrant Roman Catholics have for representing the matter, as they commonly do, as a piece of Protestant sacrilege. There is a valuable chapter in Mr. Froude's recent History of England on this subject, and much important additional matter is brought forward in a review of his work, in the *Christian Remembrancer* of July last. From these two

sources I have drawn the following facts, which are well worthy of attention. The state of the Monasteries and Religious Houses generally was such, in the reign of Henry IV., as to call from the House of Commons an indignant remonstrance, and a petition for their secularization ; and in the reign of his successor, Henry V., when Popery was wholly in the ascendant in this country, one hundred Monasteries were suppressed by order of the King. *(Froude, Vol.* 2, *p.* 411.*)* But a still more remarkable fact is the following : that a twelve month after the Act of 1536 for the suppression of smaller Monasteries in England, Pope Paul III appointed a committee of nine of the most eminent ecclesiastics, to examine into the state of the Church. These persons recommended changes far more extensive than any which the English Parliament had contemplated. So hopeless did they consider the reformation of the monastic bodies, that they united in recommending the total suppression of every Monastery in Europe. One of these nine ecclesiastics was Reginald, afterwards Cardinal Pole ; and he, firmly as he was attached to the Church of Rome, not only advised this universal sequestration of all Convents, but did not refuse to share in the spoils of their suppression in this country. On his arrival in England, he received from Queen Mary a grant of lands belonging to the dissolved Priory of Newburgh. *(Christian Remembrancer, Vol.* xxxii, *p.* 92.*)* Bishop Fisher also, one of the most zealous Prelates of the Romish party in the Church, previous to the passing of the famous Act for the suppression of Monasteries, seized on the Nunnery of Higham, after a vain attempt at its reformation, and by his own act set the example for subsequent confisca-

tions. "In fact, while the reforming* party in the Church were pleading for the preservation of some of the Convents, the opposite party were contending for their utter overthrow." *(Ibid.)* Yet notwithstanding these facts, which are attested by existing documents, Roman Catholics still speak as if the suppression of these establishments was exclusively the work of Protestants, to be ascribed to a spirit of impiety and sacrilege which the Reformation has let loose upon the Church. The truth is, that the Monastic and Conventual Establishments had become so totally corrupt, and the moral disorders by which they were affected had been proved to be so incurable, that society could no longer endure them; and the opinion prevalent among Roman Catholics, as well as Protestants, was, that the evil had arrived at such a height, that no remedy could be effectual, short of the general suppression of the Religious Houses. Both writers to whom I have referred are warm in their admiration of the original members of the monastic bodies, and of the purposes which such establishments answered at an earlier period of their history. Mr. Froude says, "Originally, and for many hundred years after their foundation, the regular clergy were the finest body of men of which mankind in their chequered history can boast." *(Vol. 2, p. 403)* And his Reviewer thus speaks of the Monasteries and Convents: "Great have been the advantages which not only devotion, but political civilization, have received from monastic establishments. In times of disturbance, they were the places of com-

* The writer evidently means the party favourable to the Reformation, in the sense in which the word is generally used.

parative peace—in days of ignorance, retreats of learning—in periods of profligacy, abodes of devotion." Yet, from the evidence which authentic records supply, the conviction has been forced upon both Mr. Froude and his Reviewer, that scarcely anything could be worse than the moral condition of the inmates of such establishments in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It is natural to regret that remedial measures were not resorted to. Possibly, however, if we possessed all the information which was in the hands of the Government and Legislature of the day, we might be convinced that the only safe and wise course was that which they pursued. But at all events, we must bear in mind that this course was advocated by the warmest friends of the Papacy; and that, although the cupidity of courtiers and public men may have hastened forward the confiscation of monastic property, yet that Roman Catholics, and even dignitaries of the Roman Catholic Church, did not refuse a share of the spoil.

I think it right, in laying before my readers the foregoing statements of Mr. Froude and his Reviewer, to express my great regret that I had not become earlier acquainted with them. Had I possessed the information which I have derived from them somewhat sooner, the language which I have used (p. 85) would have been considerably modified.

A friend has kindly furnished me with the following passages, relating to the Monastic orders, in the document which was presented to Paul III, by Cardinal Pole and the other Divines. The document itself is entitled, "Concilium delectorum Cardinalium, & aliorum Prælatorum, de emendanda Ecclesia, S. D. N. D. Paulo III. ipso jubente

conscriptum, et exhibitum, Anno M.D.XXXVIII."

The passages referred to are as follows:—

"Alius abusus corrigendus est in ordinibus religiosorum, quod adeo multi deformati sunt, ut magno sint scandalo sæcularibus, exemploque plurimum noceant. Conventuales ordines abolendos esse putamus omnes, non tamen ut alicui fiat injuria, sed prohibendo ne novos possint admittere. Sic enim sine ullius injuria cito delerentur, & boni religiosi eis substitui possent. Nunc vero putamus optimum fore, si omnes pueri qui non sunt professi, ab eorum monasteriis repellerentur."

"Abusus alius turbat Christianum populum in Monialibus, quæ sub cura fratrum conventualium, ubi in plerisque monasteriis fiunt publica sacrilegia cum maximo civium scandalo. Auferat ergo Sanct. vestra omnem eam curam a conventualibus, eamque det aut Ordinariis aut aliis, prout melius videbitur."

These passages are extracted from the "Historia Conciliorum Generalium," by Edmund Richer, Doctor and Fellow of the Sorbonne: Book IV, Part II, pp. 78-9. Colon. 1681. See also Du Pin Cent. XVI, B. I., ch. 27.

F.

(Page 126.*)*

THE CAPPERS OF BRIDGNORTH.

An Act of Parliament was passed in 1571, to enforce the wearing of Woollen Caps; but this failing to have the desired effect, and the people still continuing to indulge their fancy in the choice of covering for their heads, the Queen thought fit to exert her royal prerogative in the matter, and issued a Proclamation for the purpose of enforcing the statute. The Proclamation set forth "how that

by little and little the disobedience and wanton disorder of evil-disposed and light persons, more regarding private fantasies and variety, than public commodity or respect of duty, had increased by want of execution of the said law." It therefore commanded that Bailiffs, Constables, Churchwardens, &c., every Sunday and Festival Day, make diligent view and search in all Churches and Chapels, and all other places within the circuit and compasses of their offices, for all singular breakers and offenders of the said Statute, and without delay cause the names of such offenders, together with the day and place of the offence, to be then written, and lawfully ordered and committed." It states that the violation of this Act of Parliament tended "to the decay, ruin, and desolation of divers antient Cities and Boroughs, which had been the nourishers and bringers up, in that faculty, of great numbers of people, as London, also Exeter, Bristowe, Monmouth, Hereford, Rosse and Bridgnorth." *(Strype's Annals, Vol. 2, Book 1, C. VIII, pp. 109-110.)*

G.

(Page 130.)

ON THE CHARACTER OF CROMWELL.

It is a curious fact, that two of our great poets, writing in prose, have exerted their genius to paint, the one the character of Cromwell, the other the character of Charles I, in the darkest possible colours. Cowley, in his "Vision," has heaped on the Protector as many reproachful epithets, and as stern expressions of reprobation, as the most unrelenting royalist could desire; but the bolder wing of the

Author of "Paradise Lost," has soared far above him in the region of invective. In his famous answer to the Icon Basilica, Milton has put together for the purpose of defaming the memory of his Sovereign, a piece of writing perhaps as vituperative and scornful as is to be found in the English language. But it is not in brochures, such as these, that we are to look for just delineations of character; and as I should consider it very unwarrantable to bring an accusation againt King Charles on the authority of Milton, I should feel it to be equally so to found a charge of hypocrisy against Cromwell, on statements made in "The Vision" of Cowley, or in any writing of the kind. Unhappily the charge of hypocrisy against Cromwell rests on less questionable evidence. The following letter, written by him to Robert Hammond, Governor of the Isle of Wight, plainly convicts him of it; and affords melancholy proof of how unscrupulously he could adopt the most sacred phraseology when he had a point to gain, and enter on the discussion of the most deeply spiritual subjects, when his real purpose all the while was to win over his correspondent to his party, and to secure his co-operation in furthering his own schemes. The letter to Hammond is so curious an illustration of this, that I think it right to lay the whole of it before the reader. The occasion of his writing it was this:—King Charles had been induced by Cromwell's machinations to make his escape from Hampton Court, and to fly to the Isle of Wight, and there to entrust himself to Hammond, the Governor. This man, when he was required by the Army to surrender the person of the King to them, felt strong scruples of conscience against doing so, and for a while refused. In order to remove his scruples, both Ireton and

Cromwell wrote to him. Cromwell's letter* is written with consummate skill, but no one surely can avoid seeing how deeply it is tainted with the odious sin of hypocrisy—all the more odious for venturing so far on holy ground, and soiling with its touch things so precious as the things of the Spirit of God.

"Dear Robin,

"No man rejoyceth more to see a line from thee than myself. I know thou hast long been under tryal. Thou shalt be no loser by it. All must work for the best. Thou desirest to hear of my experiences. I can tell thee I am such a one as thou didst formerly know, having a body of sin and death; but I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord there is no condemnation, though much infirmity, and I wait for the redemption; and in this poor condition I obtain mercy and sweet consolation through the Spirit, and find abundant cause every day to exalt the Lord,—abase flesh. And herein I have some exercise.

"As to outward dispensations, if we may so call them, we have not been without our share of beholding some remarkable providences and appearances of the Lord. His presence hath been amongst us, and by the light of His countenance we have prevailed. We are sure the good will of Him who dwelt in the bush has shined upon us; and we can humbly say, we know in whom we have believed, who is able, and will perfect what remaineth, and us also in doing what is well-pleasing in His eye-sight.

"Because I find some trouble in your spirit, occasioned first, not only by the continuance of your sad and heavy burthen, as you call it, upon you; but by the dissatisfaction you take at the ways of some good men, whom you love with your heart, who through this principle, that it is lawful for a lesser part (if in the right) to force, &c.

"To the first: call not your burthen sad nor heavy. If your Father laid it upon you, he intended neither. He is the Father of lights, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift; who of His own will begot us, and bad us

* The letter is given in *p.p.* 162-5 of Tytler's "*Trials of Charles I.*"

count it all joy when such things befall us; they bring forth the exercise of faith and patience, whereby in the end (James 1st.) we shall be made perfect.

"Dear Robin, our fleshly reasonings ensnare us. These make us say, heavy, sad, pleasant, easy. Was not there a little of this, when Robert Hammond, through dissatifaction too, desired retirement from the army, and thought of quiet in the Isle of Wight? Did not God find him out there? I believe he will never forget this. And now I perceive he is to seek again, partly through his sad and heavy burthen, and partly through dissatisfaction with friends' actings. Dear Robin, thou and I were never worthy to be doorkeepers in this service. If thou wilt seek, seek to know the mind of God in all that chain of providence, whereby God brought thee thither, and that person to thee: how before and since God has ordered him, and affairs concerning him. And then tell me, whether there be not some glorious and high meaning in all this, above what thou hast yet attained. And laying aside thy fleshly reasoning, seek the Lord to teach thee what it is; and he will do it.

"You say, 'God hath appointed authorities among the nations, to which active or passive obedience is to be yielded. This resides in England in the parliament. Therefore active or passive,' &c. Authorities and powers are the ordinance of God. This or that species is of human institution, and limited, some with larger, others with stricter bands, each one according to his constitution. I do not, therefore, think the authorities may do any thing, and yet such obedience due; but all agree there are cases in which it is lawful to resist. If so, your ground fails, and so likewise the inference. Indeed, dear Robin, not to multiply words, the query is, whether ours is such a case? This ingeniously is the true question. To this I shall say nothing, though I could say very much; but only desire thee to see what thou findest in thy own heart, as to two or three plain considerations. First, Whether *salus populi* be a sound position? Secondly, Whether in the way in hand, really and before the Lord, before whom conscience must stand, this be provided for; or the whole fruit of the war like to be frustrated, and almost like to turn to what it was, and worse? And this contrary to engagements, declarations, implicit covenants with those who ventured their lives upon those covenants

and engagements, without whom perhaps, in equity, relaxation ought not to be. Thirdly, Whether this army be not a lawful power called by God to oppose and fight against the King upon so stated grounds; and being in power to such ends, may not oppose one name of authority for those ends as well as another? the outward authority that called them, not by their power making the quarrel lawful; but it being so in itself. If so, it may be, acting will be justified *in foro humano*. But truly these kind of reasonings may be but fleshly, either with or against; only it is good to try what truth may be in them. And the Lord teach us."

H.

(Page 167.*)*

DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN THE KING'S TROOPS AND THE TOWN'S PEOPLE.

The following letter,* written from Bridgnorth in the year 1642, affords evidence of the fact, that there were partizans of the Parliament in the town, who doubtless did their best to alienate the minds of the people from the King's cause; and also that the rude conduct of the soldiers, in the royal army, greatly aggravated the evil. The statements made on this latter subject must however be taken with some allowance, as they are made under the influence of strong party feeling.

"*Bridgenorth, Octob.* 1. 1642.

"Our Countrey is in a most miserable condition, there is nothing can be expected but a totall ruine thereof,

* This letter forms a part of a tract, entitled "A true and exact Relation of the Proceedings of His Majesties Army in Cheshire, Shropshire and Worstershire. Together with what hath happened to the late Lord Strange, now Earl of Derby, before Manchester. With the Resolution of the Town to oppose him; and the number of Men which were slain." It is bound up in a Volume of very valuable tracts, referring to the events of this period, and was kindly lent to me by the Rev. T. L. Claughton, of Kidderminster.

except God do miraculously help us with assistance from the Parliament. The Kings Souldiers are altogether bent on mischief, taking, wasting, and spoyling those things we should live by: they do take our Corn unthresht to litter their horses, spoyling that which many a poor creature wants; if any one speak, be it man or woman, either a Pistoll or a Sword is straight set to the party, with many grievous oathes; They know what they do, they are the King's servants, and will not be limitted of their will: you may judge by this what a case we are in; and for any thing we can perceive, like to be worse; for as long as these out-rages are permitted, no question but the King's Army will encrease: What with Papists, Atheists, and all desperate Ruffians, they have made *Shrewsbury* strong, as it is reported to us; many Pieces of Ordnance, 300 Carts laden with Ammunition; and our County of *Shropshire* is very much awed, many wel-affected people withdraw themselves: The Sheriff here hath lately seized certain thousands of pounds at our Town of *Bridgenorth*, intended to be sent down *Severn* lately to *Bristoll*, by M. *Charlton* of *Ayley*, M. *Baker* of *Hamond*, and others: We have many brags here of the Cavaliers, what victories they have had at *Worcester*, though we know for certain they are notorious lyes; yet we dare not contradict them: it grieves the soul of every good Christian, to see how His Majestie is misled. We are glad to hear of your constancy to the King and Parliament; our affections are the same, though we dare not shew it: for all the reports you have heard, you may perhaps understand by the next, that *Shropshire* is not altogether so malignant as it is reported; fear makes us yeild to many things. I am in haste.

Yours, T. C."

There is a copy of a letter among the *Blakeway Papers* from Prince Maurice, addressed to His Majesty's Commissioners for the county of Salop, dated 1645, which also affords evidence of some disaffection to the royal cause among the people of Bridgnorth, or, at least, some slackening of zeal in the King's service, produced most likely by the causes above referred to.

"Gentlemen,

"This day I received a letter from Sir Lewis Kyrke,

Governor of Bridgnorth, alleadging that his warrant for the advancement of the works at Bridgnorth were disobeyed, which I cannot avoyde to take notice of, being sent downe by His Majesty to advance the affayres of these parts, for the good of His Majesty's service. To the intent that I may ease and cherish your county as much as may bee, therefore I desire to knowe what their grievances and dislikes are, and why and upon what ground the Governor's warrants were neglected, that if reason be shewed, I may doe the country that right, which in justice they may expect, or however see those things perfected, which conduce to the security of those parts, and the better serving His Majesty, which is all att present I have to say, but that I am,

Gentlemen,
Your lv. ffriend,
MAURICE,
Comr. of Salop.

Worcester,
19 of January, 1645.

ffor his Majesty's Commissioners of the County of Salop.

I.

(Page 169.*)*

COLLEGE AND ALMSHOUSES.

The College, which stood in Saint Leonard's Church Yard, had formerly, it is supposed, been the residence of the Chauntry Priests belonging to the Church, and after the Act for the Suppression of the Religious Houses, it became the dwelling of the Master of the Grammar School. The exact year of the foundation of this School cannot be ascertained; but the Charity Commissioners, who visited Bridgnorth in 1815, fully investigated the matter, and discovered that it was in existence in the reign of Henry VIII. The following is an extract from their Report on the subject:—"It appears from the return of the Commissioners under a Commission of the 20th. July, in the second year of Edward. VI., that a Grammar

School, long before the said 20th. of July, had been continually kept in the town of Bridgnorth, with the revenues of the Chauntry of St. Leonard, in that town; and it appeared to the said Commissioners, that the Schoolmaster then for the time being should have for his wages, or salary, £8 a year, as before that time he was allowed anciently out of the revenues of the said Chauntry."

The Charity Commissioners of 1815 were equally unsuccessful in their endeavours to ascertain the origin of the Almshouses which are situate in the Church Lane; but they found, among the papers belonging to the Corporation, the presentment and verdict of a Jury empannelled at Bridgnorth, in the sixth year of Charles I., which proves that land was granted to this Charity as early as the eighth year of Henry VIII. By a Deed, however, which I copied from the Blakeway Papers in the Bodleian Library, it is evident that the Almshouses of this locality were well known in the parish of St. Leonard, in the earlier part of the reign of Henry VII. The Deed is dated 1492, and is as follows: "Alice Wood, prioress of ye house and ch. of St. Leonard, of ye White nuns of Byrywood, and the convent of ye same place. Whereas John Bruyne, of Bruggen^{t}, and his ancestors from time immemorial, have held of us, and our predecessors, in ye High Street of Bruggen^{t} betw. ye land belong^{g} to ye chantry of S^{t} Tho. Martyr, in ye Ch. of St. Leonard, there on ye North, and *the Almshouse on ye South*, we confirm his estate therein, and grant it to Wm. Otteley, of Salop, and Margery his Wife." *

* "William Otley, ancestor of the Otleys of Pitchford, married Margery, daughter and sole heir of John Bruyn of Bridgnorth, and thus obtained much property in this

K.

(Page 173.)

SURRENDER OF THE CASTLE.

"Articles agreed upon for the Surrender of Bridgnorth Castle, the 26th. day of April, 1646; between

Sir Robert Howard, Knight of the Bath, Governor,
Sir Vincent Corbet,
Sir Edward Acton, and
Sir Francis Ottley, Commissioners for the King;

and

Colonel Andrew Lloyd,
Colonel Robert Clive, and
Robert Charlton, Esquire, Commissioners for the Parliament.

I. That all Commissioned Officers of Horse, and all Captains of Foot, shall march away to any of His Majesty's Garrisons or Armies within forty miles, with their horses and arms for themselves, and each of them to have a servant, with his horse and sword, and their wearing apparel. Free quarter for thirty miles, and safe conduct, and not to march less than eight miles a day. Any of the aforesaid Officers to repair to any of their own habitations.

II. That all inferior Commissioned Officers shall have liberty to march with their swords, and the common soldiers without arms, to any of His Majesty's Garrisons or Armies within forty miles, as before stated, on laying down their arms; to live at their own habitations for a fortnight, and afterwards to take the negative oath if they live within the county, or letters from hence to the

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neighbourhood. Among other estates, that of "The Hay," thus acquired, has remained with the Owners of Pitchford till the present generation."—*Rev. R. Eyton.*

Committees of the several counties where they intend to reside, and to have papers granted them accordingly.

III. That all Clergymen, Townsmen, and Countrymen, within the Castle, may have liberty to repair to their own habitations, provided they lay down their arms, and a fortnight's time allowed them for taking the negative oath, and not to live within a mile of the Parliament Garrisons; or otherwise, if they should desire it, to march to any of the King's Garrisons or Armies.

IV. That all wounded and sick persons within the Castle shall have liberty to reside in the Low Town, or elsewhere, till they be fit to travel; and then to have passes to go home, or to any of the King's Garrisons or Armies.

V. That Sir Robert Howard, Sir Vincent Corbet, Sir Edward Acton, and Sir Francis Ottley, with each of them, their horses, arms, and two men a piece, with their horses and swords, and their master's wearing apparel, shall have liberty to march to their several habitations, and to continue there for the space of two months: to which time they are to make their election, whether they will go to make their peace with the Parliament, or go beyond Sea, or to any of the King's Garrisons, or Armies, and to have passes accordingly,—they engaging themselves to do nothing prejudicial to the Parliament in the mean time.

VI. That Mr. Howard, Mr. Fisher, and Mr. Grovenor, shall march away with their horses and arms, and one man a piece, with their apparel and swords, to any place within forty miles.

VII. That Lieutenant Col. Hosier and Doctor Dewen shall march away without horse or arms, to any of the King's Garrisons, or any other place

within thirty miles; provided it be not within this County.

VIII. That Mr. Milward, Captain of the Garrison, may have liberty to go with a horse, to his house at Leighton, in this County, and to take with him his manuscripts, and there to live, taking the negative oath within one month's time; or is to march away out of the County with the rest.

IX. That the Clerks of the Commissioners may have liberty to march, as the rest of the inferior Officers, and to have the same conditions; and to take with them all papers concerning the Garrison, and their wearing apparel.

X. That Lady Ottley, her children, and maid-servant have liberty, with their wearing cloaths, to go to Pitchford, or the Hay, and there to live unmolested.

XI. That all women and children within the Castle, may have liberty to go to their own, or any of their friends' houses, provided it be not within one mile of this Garrison.

XII. That all Gentlemen, Officers, and Soldiers, within the Castle, Strangers as well as others, desiring to go beyond the Sea, shall have passes accordingly, and letters to the Committee of their several Counties, to afford them the like conditions as to the Gentlemen of this County, upon the surrender of this Castle here granted.

XIII. That the Surgeon belonging to this Garrison shall march away, and to have the same conditions as the inferior Officers.

XIV. That the Gunners and Powdermen, with their mates, may march away as the rest of the common Soldiers.

XV. That no violence, injury, or incivility, shall be offered to any who shall march out of this

Castle, but be protected in all things, according to the tenor of these Articles; and that sufficient Hostage on both sides be given for the performance of all and every the matters here agreed upon.

XVI. That the Governor, and the rest of the Officers, shall do their utmost endeavors to protect and preserve all the ordinances, arms, ammunition, victuals, provisions, goods, bedding, and all other accommodation necessary and belonging to the Castle, other than what is allowed to be taken by the aforesaid Articles; and all these, safe and unspoiled, to be delivered up, together with the Castle, unto the Committee whom they shall appoint; and these Articles to be confirmed by the Governor.

XVII. That if these Articles be consented to, the Castle to be surrendered by seven of the clock to morrow morning; and those who intend to march to Worcester, to quarter in the Low Town, or any other Town within five miles of the Garrison, upon the return of the Trumpeter and Officer sent to Worcester; provided they come within two days.

XVIII. That if any Officer, or Soldier, shall in any way maliciously spoil his horse or arms, or misdemean himself in his march, such misdemeanor shall not be extended further than upon the party offending; and upon them Justice shall be done according to the discipline of war.

XIX. That all Commissioned Officers be certified by the Governor of the Castle, and upon his certificate be allowed to march accordingly; and that all Troopes march away with their swords.

XX. That Mr. Edward Lathan* (Latham) be

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* "I suppose the reason of Mr. Latham's being excepted from the terms of Capitulation was his not being in

delivered to the mercy of the Parliament.

(Signed)

ANDREW LLOYD,
ROBERT CLIVE,
ROBERT CHARLETON."

L.

(Page 176.*)*

ASSIGNMENT OF GOODS AND CHATTELS AT APLEY.

The following is a copy of the assignment of the goods and chattels of Apley, by the Parliamentary Sequestrators, to Roger Rowley, Esq., of Rowley, in the Parish of Worfield. The original document is in the possession of T. C. Whitmore, Esq., of Apley, who kindly furnished me with this transcript.

"Wee, John Broome, Solicitor for Sequestrators in the County of Salop, John Llwellyn, Richard Hawkshead, and Thomas Achelley, Agents for Sequest^rs, in the said County, According to an order of the Committee of Parliamt. for the said County, requireing us, amongst others, to sell and

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military service. I judge it from the following reference to him in the Articles of the surrender of the Town of Worcester :—

"In the surrender of Worcester, Sir Wm. Russell was excepted from the terms of the Capitulation; and it was required that he should be given up unconditionally to the Parliament. This was protested against by the Royalists, who said that it would be as much as consenting to his murder, and that no such exception had been made in any articles of surrender, except in the case of Mr. Latham, which was not a similar case, inasmuch as he, Mr. R., was one of the Prince's Soldiers,—and Commanders ought to have a soldier's conditions."

dispose of the personall estate of S^r. William Whitmore of Apley, in the said County, Knight, for and to the use of the state, Have and in consyderacion of the some of five hundred eighty three pounds 3^s. & 2^d. payed and secured to be payed unto us for the use of the state, by Roger Rowley, of Rowley, in the said County, Esquire, sould and

And by these presents doe sell and deliver unto the said Roger Rowley, all the goods, chattels and personal estate of the said S^r. Will^m. Whitmore in the severall Inventoryes hereunto annexed,—attested under our hand To have and to hould to him the said Roger Rowley, his executors, administrators & assigns for ever. In witnes whereof wee have hereunto putt our hands and seales the xxiii day of February, Anno Dm^ni. 1647.

JOHN BROME,
JOHN LLEWELLEN,
RICH. HAWKSHED,
THO: ACHELLEY.

Sealed & delivered in the presence of

WALT: ACTON,
GEORGE STRINGER,
RICHARD EVANS,
JEFFRY BLACKSHAW."

M.

(Page 178.*)*

THE SUFFERINGS OF THE CLERGY DURING THE COMMONWEALTH.

IT is very important that the members of the Church of England, and others, should receive some correct information on the subject of religious persecution, or persecution for conscience

sake; for a very great mistake on the subject very commonly prevails—namely, that the Dissenters have always been the suffering party, and the Church the offending party, in this matter. At a time, indeed, when the duty of toleration was little understood, some of the rulers of the Church of England, as well as of the government of the day, did exercise the most unjustifiable severity against those who ventured to separate from the established religion. But the instances of this have been so much insisted on, and have been so frequently made the subject of popular declamation, that many have been led to imagine that the Church of England has, again and again, been chargeable with the guilt of cruelly persecuting her opponents, while the opponents have been guiltless of any such wrong against her. But the impression is a most erroneous one; for it may be asserted, without the fear of contradiction, that the sufferings which the clergy endured in the short space of three years during the Commonwealth, at the hands of those who had separated from her, were in severity and extent greater than the whole amount of suffering which she may have been the instrument of inflicting on separatists for the hundred years previous.*

In proof of this, Gauden,† in the Petitionary Remonstrance which he delivered to Cromwell, in behalf of the suffering Clergy of England, stated that the number of Ministers ejected from the benefices amounted to 8000. And Gauden would not, in a public address, and to such

* Heglin's History of the Presbyterians, p. 459.

† Carwithen's History of the Church of England, Vol. 3, p. 512.

a man as Cromwell, have ventured to make a false or careless statement. But a much closer investigation of the subject was afterwards made, and the result of it was published by Walker, in his well-known work, entitled—"The Sufferings of the Clergy," from which it may be seen that, if we include in the catalogue the Cathedral Clergy, and the Clergy belonging to the Universities, and chaplains,—as well as the parochial ministers and their curates,—the sufferers far exceeded the number above stated. By a resolution passed in the House of Commons, during the Protectorate of Cromwell, all ministers were to be deprived of their benefices who refused to sign the League and Covenant; and, consequently, numbers who were too loyal to subscribe a document so hostile to the interests of the King and the Church, were at once reduced to poverty, and had to bear the severest hardships and privations. They and their families were driven from their houses, not knowing where to look for food and shelter; exposed also to the brutal insolence of the military, who found as much pleasure in plundering a peaceful parsonage, as in defiling the sanctity of the house of God. And these outrages appear to have been sanctioned by those in authority, rather than repressed. Besides this, numbers were thrown into prisons—the ancient palaces of the Bishops being turned into jails for the purpose; and when these and the common prisons in London were crowded with inmates, "many" as Clarendon states, "both of the laity and clergy, were committed to prison on board the Ships in the river Thames, where they were kept under decks, and no friend suffered to come to them, by which many lost their lives." Nor is this to be omitted, in giving account of their sufferings,

that while they were enduring these wrongs, for conscience sake—nay, suffering the loss of all things, rather than abandon their principles—they were vilified in Parliament, and by the public press, as being little better than criminals; and men, whose reputation had never been blemished by a single stain,—whose deep learning, and still deeper piety, would have reflected honor on any church of which they had been members;—men who were saints indeed, in the true and ancient sense of the word—were held up to public scorn, as if they were not fit to live, and branded by the name of "malignant and scandalous ministers."

The recollection of these persecutions, inflicted on the loyal body of the clergy, sharpened the feelings of the Government, after the Restoration, against Dissenters; and those who then came into power were too ready to make reprievals for the injuries and wrongs committed during the Commonwealth. The consequence was, that many excellent men, whose devotedness to God and whose zeal in the pastoral office was unquestioned—men of whom, indeed, "the world was not worthy," and whose only offence was want of conformity to the Church, suffered very severely; but their sufferings were trifling, both in extent or severity, compared to the previous sufferings of the Clergy: so much, indeed, does the one exceed the other, that Archbishop Bramhall, who certainly was one not accustomed to utter words at random, says, "Let Mr. Baxter sum up into one catalogue all the nonconformists throughout the kingdom of England, even since the beginning of the Reformation, who have been cast aside, or driven away. I dare abate him all the rest of the kingdom, and only exhibit the Martyrologies of London, and the two Univer-

sities, or a list of those who in the late intestine wars have been haled away to prisons, or chased away into banishment, by his own party, in these three places alone; or left to the merciless world to beg their bread, for no other crime than loyalty, and because they stood affected to the ancient rites and ceremonies of the Church of England, and they shall *double* them for number."—*Grot*: *Relig.* p. 116.

It is very desirable that such facts as these should be known; not that the knowledge of them may serve to ferment and keep alive any feelings of hostility, or unkindness, towards those who still maintain the principles of non-conformity—such a purpose cannot be too strongly repudiated; but, that we may have an answer to give to such as charge the Church with intolerance and persecution, and may be able to shew, that in this respect she has been far more "sinned against than sinning." These facts also prove to us, and on this account they are worthy of record, that the principles of the Church of England were considered by our forefathers as worth suffering for; and that rather than surrender the Articles of her Creed, or abrogate her regimen, they willingly endured the severest penalties; took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and counted not their life dear unto them. Happily, the day of persecution for conscience sake is past,—the spirit of the age does not tolerate any thing like violence;—would that our "unhappy divisions" were at an end also;—that all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity were not only of one heart, but of one mind also—were "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement," "spoke the same things," "walked by the same rule;" not only

kept "the unity of the Spirit," but also unity of worship and of doctrine. This is the fellowship which the Scripture teaches should subsist between the members of Christ's Church; and nothing short of this should be the object of your hopes and prayers.

N.

(Page 184.*)*

DR. PERCY.

THE following particulars respecting Dr. Percy, have been very kindly communicated to me by the Rev. H. E. Boyd, Rector of Dromara, in the County of Down, who was for many years domestic Chaplain to the Bishop:—"The Right Reverend Thomas Percy, D. D., Bishop of Dromore, in Ireland, highly distinguished in the literary world, the son of Arthur Lowe Percy, by his wife Jane Nott, was born at Bridgnorth, and baptized the 29th of April, 1729; his grandfather, Arthur Percy, having removed thither from the City of Worcester, where his family had been settled for several generations. Arthur was grandson of Thomas Percy, who was Mayor of Worcester, in 1662. The subject of this note received the rudiments of his education at the Grammar School of Bridgnorth, and graduated as A. M. from Christ's Church College, Oxford, in 1753: in November of that year, in the presentation of his College, he was instituted to the Vicarage of Easton Manduit, in Northamptonshire, which he retained until 1782. In 1756, he became resident, and was presented to the Rectory of Willby, by the Earl of Sussex, whose Mansion was close to the Parsonage. In 1759, he was married to Ann Goderick, after an attachment of several

years, to whom he had addressed the pastoral ballad of "O Nancy, wilt thou go with me;" which being transformed, by changing some words into the Scottish dialect, "Nancy" into "Nannie," "go" into "gang," &c., has passed with many persons as an original Scottish ballad, written by Burns, or Allan Ramsay. During his residence at Bridgnorth, through the kindness of Mr. Humphrey Pitt, of Prior's Lee, he became possessed of the M. S. folio of Ancient Poetry, which exercised a magnetic influence on his literary taste, and led to the publication of the Reliques, in 1764. Through the kindness of the Earl of Sussex, he was introduced to the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland, who appointed him their domestic Chaplain, and patronized him in his Antiquarian pursuits. In 1769, he became Chaplain in Ordinary to King George III; and having obtained the degree of S. T. P., from Emmanuel College, Cambridge, he was collated to the Deanery of Carlisle, 1778; and in 1782, elevated to the see of Dromore, where he died 30th September, 1811, in the 84th year of his age, revered by all sects and classes in his Diocese, to whom the exercise of every virtue—piety, charity, and hospitality—especially to his Clergy, had endeared him, during an episcopate of nearly thirty years. There, his memory is still vividly preserved: and recollections of his kindness are traditionally handed down from father to son by the inhabitants of Dromore. He survived his excellent and amiable partner, Mrs. Percy, about five years; they are both interred in a vault in the north aisle of Dromore Cathedral, which was added in 1804, and erected chiefly at the Bishop's expense. The "Key to the New Testament," a most useful manual to the Divinity Student, and a

translation of the "Song of Solomon," with some occasional Sermons, form the chief of the Bishop's theological labours. An allusion to his discursions in the other various paths of literature, in which he was engaged, would extend this notice to an inconvenient length. And as it is intended to give a more detailed account of this eminent man, in case the copious supply of materials, known to be in existence, be contributed and placed in the hands of the writer, the brevity of this sketch will be the less to be regretted."

O.

(Page 191.*)*

PETITION PRESENTED TO LADY BARTUE.

The following is a copy of the Petition, presented to Lady Bartue, the draft of which is preserved among the papers of the Corporation:—

"We are bold (hearing of your noble and charitable disposition to distressed people) to impart unto you, that in these miserable times our Town is left a sad spectacle and pitiful object of the woeful effects of war; for besides the firing of more than 300 families, we had also burnt, a fair Church, College, Almshouse, and Market House; whereby we are exposed to great misery and distress. The Parliament, upon our humble address for some relief, hath vouchsafed us a Brief, and we are upon that work, hopeing, by God's blessing thereunto, we shall live to see some of our public losses againe repaired. Now our motion is humbly, that your Ladyship, having an old ruinous Barn, at Wenlock, which would serve for the bonds of a new Market House, hearing that it is to be sold, do address ourselves hereby to your Ladyship, desirous

that you would be pleased to sell us the same; and send us a price in consideration of our poor condition. We are not willing to meddle with the slate covering, only the wood and timber; entreating that you will be pleased to favour us in the summer. We conceive it worth £40 or £50 and great charge we shall be at to take it down. We humbly beseech, that we shall have your Ladyship's pleasure therein; that we may know what to trust unto in that behalf. And you will oblige unto yours—those by whom this Petition represent—the whole body of the Town, and are

Your humble Servants,

HENRY BURNE,
RICHARD SYNGE, } *Bailiffs.*

Bridgnorth,
26th. Feby, 1647."

"*To the Honourable the*
LADY BARTUE,
Present these."

P.

(Page 193.)

ALMS HOUSES.

The foundation of this Charity has already been referred to Appendix I, and proofs given of its antiquity. An official report of it was drawn up by the Rev. Wm. Corser, in 1792, and presented to the Corporation; after a very careful investigation into its history. In this, he states it as his opinion, that it was first established and supported by the members of the Religious fraternity of the

neighbouring College in St. Leonard's Church-yard; though the management of it, and the right of appointment to it, was vested entirely in the Corporation. The objects of the Charity were originally poor persons, of either sex,—"the Alms Houses being open to poor Burgesses' wives; but, for the last hundred years, the Charity has been confined to poor women," the widows, or unmarried daughters of Burgesses, seven chosen from the parish of St. Leonard's, and five from the parish of St. Mary's. The management of the Charity is placed by a late Act of Parliament, in the hands of "the Trustees of General Charity Trusts."

Q.

(Page 193.*)*

THE PROCLAMATION OF CHARLES II.

"Charles the Second, by the Grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, &c. To all, and singular, Archbishops, Bishops, Archdeacons, Deans, and their Officials, Parsons, Ministers, Lecturers, Vicars and Curates, and all other Spiritual Persons: And also to all Justices of the Peace, Mayors, Sheriffs, Bailiffs, Constables, Churchwardens, Collectors for the Poor, and Headboroughs: And to all Officers of Cities, Boroughs, and Towns, Corporate; and to all other our Officers, Ministers, and Subjects, whatsoever they be, as well within Liberties as without, to whom these Presents shall come, Greeting.

"Whereas, We are credibly given to understand, as well by the humble Supplication and Petition of the Bailiffs and Burgesses of Our Town of Bridgnorth, in Our County of Salop, as also by a Certificate under the hands and seals of our Trusty and

well-beloved Subjects, Sir William Whitmore, Baronet, Sir Thomas Wolrich, Knight and Baronet, Sir Walter Acton, Baronet, Sir John Weld, the younger, Knight, Sir Richard Otley, Knight, Richard Scriven, Thomas Whitmore, Robert Sandford, Robert Leighton, and Thomas Holland, Esqs.; Justices of the Peace, at the general Sessions of the Peace held for the said County, at Salop, on Tuesday next after the Feast of the Epiphany, now last past, that in the year of our Lord One Thousand, Six Hundred, Forty and Six, at which time, our said Town being kept as a Garrison for Our dear Father, the same was surprized by the contrary party then in Arms, and the upper town thereof being set on fire, all the houses and the greatest part of the goods and wares therein, and their Market-house, the Colledge, Alms Houses, and great Collegiate Church, were burned down and consumed, and that at the said Sessions, it appeared to our said Justices, by the Oaths of Edward Whitehead and Michaell Millington, able and sufficient persons; that the losses sustained by the same fire, do amount in the whole unto the value of Threescore Thousand Pounds at the least; which being to the utter destruction and laying waste of Our said town, and the great impoverishment and undoing of the Inhabitants thereof, unless they shall be relieved by the love and charity of such whose hearts the Lord (who is the great disposer of hearts) shall warm and stir up to commiserate them in this their most deplorable condition, Our said Justices did humbly certifie the same to Our Princely and Christian consideration, to the end that our gracious Letters Patents for a collection of the charitable benevolence of our well-disposed subjects of Our Kingdome of England,

might be granted unto Our said Bailiffs, Burgesses, and other Inhabitants of our said town, for and towards their relief and the re-edifying of the said Collegiate Church and Colledge. We therefore, and upon the Petition of the said Bailiffs, Burgesses, and Inhabitants have thereunto condescended, not doubting but that all compassionate and tender-hearted Christians rightly and duely considering the Premisses and the miserable and mutable state of man through these inevitable and deplorable accidents, (none knowing how soon they may fall into the like calamity) will be ready and willing to extend their liberal contributions towards this so charitable and pious a work, the same tending not only to the relief, support, and refreshment of Our said distressed subjects in their great necessity, but to the advancement of the Honour and Worship of Almighty God. Know ye therefore, that of Our especial grace and Christian compassion have given and granted, and by these Our Letters Patents under Our great Seal of England, We do give and grant unto Our said poor distressed subjects, the Bailiffs, Burgesses, and other Inhabitants of Bridgnorth aforesaid, and to their Deputy and Deputies, the Bearer and Bearers hereof, authorized and deputed in that behalf, as hereafter in these presents is appointed, full power license and authority, to ask, gather, receive and take the alms and charitable benevolence of all of Our loving subjects whatsoever; inhabiting within our Kingdome of England, and all and every the Cities, Towns corporate, priviledged places, Parishes, Hamblets, Villages, and in all other places whatsoever, within our said Kingdome, for and towards the re-edifying, re-building, and repairing of the said Collegiate Church, College, and Alms Houses, in

the first place; and after for and towards the reimbursements and recovery of the losses and for the future support of Our said poor distressed subjects, and for the relief of them and their desolate families, which being a work of so Christian and charitable concernment, will doubtless be readily and fervently promoted and performed by all well-disposed people, who upon their serious and due consideration of the said great Losses, will, with a fellow-feeling of the miseries and distresses of their fellow Christians extend their free and cheerful contributions more then ordinary in this pious and blessed work, for in so doing they do lend unto the Lord, and hence it is that wisdom itself hath said and testified, That it is more blessed to give than to receive. Wherefore, We will and command you, and every of you, that at such time and times, as the said Bailiffs, Burgesses, and Inhabitants of Bridgnorth aforesaid, their Deputy or Deputies, the Bearer or Bearers hereof, (authorized and deputed as hereafter in these presents is appointed,) shall come and repair to any of your Churches, Chappels, or other places, to ask and receive the gratuities and charitable benevolence or Our said loving Subjects, quietly to permit and suffer them so to do, without any manner of your lets, or contradictions. And you, the said Parsons, Ministers, Lecturers, Vicars and Curates, for the better stirring up of a charitable devotion, deliberately to publish according to the tenor of these Our Letters Patents, or brief hereof unto the people, upon the Lord's Day next after the same shall be tendered unto you,—exhorting, perswading, and stirring them up to extend their liberal contributions towards this so pious and charitable a work. And you, the said Churchwardens of every Parish, and Collectors for

the poor, where such Collection is to be made, as aforesaid, together with such other honest active men there, as shall be nominated by the minister and your selves, are hereby willed and required to collect and gather the Alms and charitable benevolence of Our said loving subjects: not only Householders, but also Servants, Strangers, and others: And if you shall find it more expedient for an effectual performance of this pious work, you are to go from house to house in your respective parishes, upon the Week dayes, to gather the Alms of Our said loving subjects. And what shall be by you so gathered by vertue of these presents, in the said parishes and places, to be by the Ministers and yourselves, endorsed on the back side of these our Letters Patents, or the true copies or briefs hereof, in words at length and not in figures; which endorsement is to be subscribed with the hands of you the said Ministers, Churchwardens, and such in each Parish or Place, as shall assist you in such Collection, and also to be registered in the Books of your respective Parishes: And the sum and sums of money so gathered and endorsed you are to deliver to the bearer or bearers of these Our Letters Patents, so deputed and authorized as hereafter in these presents is appointed, whensoever you shall be by him or them required so to do: whose receiving thereof, with his or their Acquitance or Acquitances shall be sufficient discharge for so doing; which said bearer or bearers of these Our Letters Patents, are hereby willed and required forthwith to pay and deliver all the moneys by them so to be collected and received as aforesaid, unto John Bennett, George Weld, and the said Thomas Holland Esquires, and to John Rogerson, Robert Richards, and Thomas Fingmore, of the said town

of Bridgnorth, gent., aforesaid, or any two of them, whom We do by these presents nominate, constitute and appoint the Treasurers of all such moneys, as shall be collected and gathered by virtue of these Our Letters Patents, who are from time to time to pay and dispose of the same moneys, in such manner and order as the said Sir Thomas Wolrich, Sir William Whitmore, Sir Walter Acton, Sir John Weld the younger, Thomas Whitmore and Thomas Holland, Esquires, and Michael Thomas, Rector of Stockton, in the said County of Salop, or any three or more of them, shall by writing under their hands and seals direct and appoint the same. And lastly, for the more assurance of faithful and equal dealing in the receipt accompt, and distribution of the moneys hereby to be collected as aforesaid, and that the said Bailiffs, Burgesses, and Inhabitants of Bridgnorth aforesaid, may not be defeated of any part thereof, but enjoy the full benefit of this Our Royal favour extended to them, and that a true and honest accompt may be given and rendered to them, Our will and pleasure is, that no man shall be employed to collect any of the said moneys but such only as shall be appointed and authorized thereunto, by Deputation or Deputations under the hands and seals of the said Treasurers or any two of them, and that such person or persons as shall be so deputed, to make the said collections within our City of London, and the liberties and suburbs thereof, shall beside the said Deputation procure a Testimonial in this behalf from the Lord Mayor of Our said City of London for the time being, under his hand and seal, whom we do by these presents desire to grant the same accordingly, that so no scruple or impediment, may be raised to

prevent or hinder a ready, speedy, and effectual performance, in Our said City of London, and the Liberties and Suburbs thereof, of Our Royal will and pleasure herein before declared; and for the better and more speedy collecting of the said charitable benevolence, Our further will and pleasure is, that the said respective Deputies (if they shall see cause) shall respectively deliver Briefs unto the chief Constables, of every Hundred or Division, in every of the said Counties, who are hereby required to distribute the same to the respective Churchwardens of every Parish or Precinct, within their respective Constabularies, and when such collection shall be made as aforesaid, the said several Churchwardens are required to return to each respective Chief Constable the Briefs received by them, together with the moneys collected by the same, to be endorsed thereupon and subscribed in manner as is hereby before directed and appointed, and the said chief Constables to give discharges for the receipt thereof accordingly, which said chief Constables are to deliver and pay the said moneys so by them to be received, together with the said Brief or Briefs so endorsed as aforesaid, unto the bearer or bearers of these our Letters Patents, so to be deputed as aforesaid, at the Assizes next after such their receipt thereof whensoever holden within the several and respective Counties, or whensoever they shall be required thereunto, by the person or persons so deputed as aforesaid, and the said Treasurers or any two of them are hereby willed and required, from time to time to pay and distribute the Moneys so to be by them received as aforesaid, in and about the uses aforesaid, and the promoting and carrying on the same by and according to such directions and

appointments as they shall from time to time receive from the persons for that purpose herein above-named, or any three or more of them: Any Law, Statute, Act, Ordinance, or Provision heretofore made to the contrary hereof in any wise notwithstanding. In witness whereof, we have caused these Our Letters to be made Patents for the spase of one whole year next after the date hereof to endure, and no longer. Witnesse Our Self at Westminster, the first day of June, in the Thirteenth year of our Raign."

God save the King.

R.

(Page 199.*)*

NON-JURING BISHOPS.

What makes the resistance of these Prelates to the unconstitutional proceedings of James the more remarkable is, that they afterwards submitted to deprivation, rather than renounce their allegiance to him. When he was deposed, or as others would represent it, when he abdicated the throne, they could not be persuaded by any inducements to abjure his sovereignty, and to take the oath of allegiance to William. They regarded James as still their lawful King, and judged that it would be a violation of the law of God for them to renounce his authority: and, therefore, neither the remembrance of the wrongs which he had done them, nor the prospect of what they might be called to suffer for maintaining their allegiance to him, could shake their fidelity. They refused, notwithstanding the many overtures which were made to them, to take the customary oaths to the new King, hence the name of "Non-Jurors." They were perhaps

extreme in their views, and carried their principles of non-resistance and passive obedience so far, as to involve them in great practical difficulties, which has afforded to their opponents matter for much contemptuous ridicule. But those who express this scorn for the principles of the Non-Jurors, should remember that they were the principles maintained by every protestant community before the revolution —maintained as strenuously by Burnet* and Tillotson, during the reign of the Stuarts, as by the seven Bishops. Here lay the difference, that on the accession of William, the former renounced these doctrines, and, in consequence, were advanced to high places of honour and emolument: the latter still adhered to them, though their adherence cost them the loss of all things. This too happened at a time when, according to the testimony of Mr. Macaulay, principle was a very rare quality indeed in public men of any party; so that the sacrifice which the non-juring Bishops and Clergy made for conscience sake stands out in striking contrast to the selfishness and corruption which every where surrounded them. This contrast is so ably drawn by a writer in the Christian Remembrancer, of April last, that I think it well to submit it to the Reader.

"To this scene of falsehood and perfidy and unbridled selfishness,—to the duplicity of the great men, and the corruption of the little men in the

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* "No doubt Ken had an eye to both these Prelates when he wrote thus to Burnet, 'many persons of *our own coat* for several years together preached up Passive Obedience to a much greater height than ever I did, and on a sudden without the least acknowledgement of their past error, preach'd and acted quite the contrary.'"—*Life of Bishop Ken by a Layman.*

state,—there was at this time one striking contrast. There was one body of men in England, who, in spite of the low tone of public honesty, did through evil report, through scorn and ridicule, through the loss of their daily bread, stick to their principles. There was one body of men possessed of reputation and competence, and some of them of high station and wealth, who might have kept all—have been caressed and flattered, at least feared or treated with respect—might at least have kept their freeholds and their influence, their peerages and palaces, or their quiet country parsonages, merely by saying a few words against their convictions, and who would not. It was nothing very fearful or profligate that they were called to do. It was then, and is still, even among those who sympathise with them, a great question whether they ought not to have done it. It was something for which, had they wanted a pretext, they could have found not pretexts but good reasons, in the example, and opinion, and authority of numbers of their brethren—good, and conscientious, and pure-minded men. It was something which Beveridge and Bishop Wilson could do with a clear conscience. But their consciences would not allow them to do it; and they did it not. Call them over-scrupulous, call them narrow-minded, say that they were entangled and misled by a false theory of government, still the fact remains; their duty seemed to them clear and plain, and their duty they followed at all costs. They lost everything by it; they were cast out of the Church, they were cast out of the State; too few to have any influence, too unpopular to hope for converts, they found themselves cut off from the body of their countrymen, cut off from all the chief walks of life, homeless and living on alms,

pitied by friends, suspected by all in power, ridiculed by the world, plunged into the miseries and perplexities of a new and difficult course of action, and of a small isolated clique, with small comfort for the present, and small hope for the future. Granting all that their critics or their enemies said of them—and they have had keen critics and rancorous enemies,—that they were fretful and cross-grained, that they were peevish and could not reason—that they were censorious and ill-natured to their opponents—that their theories were absurd, their heads hot, their intestine quarrels about small points very petty—granting that Sancroft was sour and self-opiniated, Turner a busy plotter, Collier indiscreet and a proud priest, that Dodwell had odd notions on the immortality of the soul, and that Hickes was as tiresome as Mr. Macaulay himself about the Theban legion—still there is no denying the fact, that while the great men of the day, who were having their will, and riding on the high places of the earth, were, most of them, men whom we should shun as we do sharpers and swindlers—the mocked and ruined Non-jurors were honest men." *(Christian Remembrancer, vol.* XXXI, *p p.* 412-413*).*

One of these has left a name in the Church which will be honoured, as long as simplicity and godly sincerity are held in estimation among men. The life of Bishop Ken, both before and after his deprivation, was one so blameless and harmless—one of such uniform gentleness and charity, as to win almost universal reverence and regard; and the record of it has extorted the admiration of those who are most opposed to his principles. He refused to take the new oath of allegiance. After giving the subject every possible consideration, and calmly

and dispassionately deliberating on it, he felt that he could not with a clear conscience swear fidelity to William and Mary as his liege sovereigns, and he submitted patiently to the penalties which his refusal brought upon him. He felt it his duty to enter a public protest against the act of the government, which deprived him of his Bishopric; but he retired from it without a murmur, attended, however, by the tears and lamentations of his flock, who had known him long enough to form an estimate of his character, and to calculate their loss in being deprived of his overseership and counsel. Like others of his Brethren, he would have been reduced to great poverty, had not his attached friend and College companion, Lord Weymouth, received him into his house, at Longleat. There he lived for upwards of thirty years after his deprivation, and there he died. He suffered during his latter years an amount of bodily anguish, which few men are called on to endure, and this he sought to alleviate, and not in vain, by the exercise of prayer and contemplation, and by indulging in strains of sacred poetry, for which he had a natural aptitude. These he called anodynes, and "alleviations of Paine," and such they proved to him. His Biographer states that "writing, saying, and singing hymns, were his chief solace: they turned his mournings into penitential sighs." His death was like his life, one of perfect peace. His burial was in harmony with his character, free from ostentation and parade. His special request was that he might be buried in the Church-yard of the nearest parish without any manner of pomp or ceremony, and that he might be carried to the grave by six of the poorest men in the parish. He left in his last Will this declaration of his stedfast attachment to

the Church, which coming from one of his stamp is of no small importance in these days of disloyalty and division :—

"As for my Religion, I die in the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Faith, professed by the whole Church, before the disunion of the East and West: more particularly I die in the Communion of ye Church of England, as it stands distinguished from all Papall and Puritan innovations, and as it adheres to the doctrine of the Crosse."

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